“Listening to my readers”: The Personal Literacies Landscapes of children learning to read.

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Abstract

This thesis explores my practice supporting children who find learning to read particularly difficult, focusing on my work with five children aged between five and seven. My study began as a mixed methods Action Research investigation of aspects of the structured multisensory reading intervention that I based my teaching on, but gradually changed to become a purely qualitative study that strived to make explicit the implicit knowledge and skills that I brought to the role of a reading support teacher. In a series of vignettes, I have interrogated my work with each of the children, writing both about the moments of intensity that were unique to that individual, and also the common threads that ran through their experiences. Drawing on concepts developed by posthumanist thinkers led me to re-imagine my practice as an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), in which the cognitive aspects of learning to read, in the form of the reading intervention, intra-act with the agential properties of time, space and the material resources (Barad, 2007), and with affective 'flows' (Stewart, 2007). This theoretical framework was methodologically challenging, but using Gullion's (2018) diffractive ethnography helped me to identify the aspects of my practice which I have termed the "more-than-cognitive" elements of reading support teaching, which work together to create the positive emotional experiences that learning to read is based upon. In this process, I have also explored how the children's emotional as well as cognitive experiences with literacies, both in school and at home, have combined to become an important part of their 'ways of being' in the world. I have described this concept as "Personal Literacies Landscapes", and explored its potential to deepen our understanding, not only in the sphere of literacy support teaching but also in the lives of readers of all ages. My vignettes illustrate how exploring children's "Personal Literacies Landscapes" can help in finding literacy activities which appeal strongly to them and also help them to navigate the affective challenges of becoming a skilled reader. I argue that this process is fundamental to the success of reading support interventions. My hope is that this thesis will form a springboard from which I can both generate ideas and approaches that will help other practitioners doing similar work, both by increasing the understanding of the experience of struggling to learn to read for young children, and also of the type of support that might best help them.

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Chapter1. Setting the scene

In this chapter, I describe how my PhD journey began as a fairly conventional Action Research study, in which I explored my practice as a teacher working with children who experienced difficulties in learning to read. This experience had left me with unanswered questions, but also ideas and experiences that I wanted to investigate further. However, the first year of my fieldwork generated new knowledge and insights which sent me off on new trajectories, looking at my practice with completely fresh ways of thinking. The final section of this chapter outlines the often unexpected, sometimes challenging, but ultimately much more rewarding, thesis journey that I subsequently embarked upon.

1.1. How my thesis journey began

In many ways, this thesis began over thirty years ago, when I moved from being a Nursery teacher to having my first Reception class of five-year-olds. I had been trained in the era of 'whole book' literacy lessons, which were based on rich experiences with texts, but sidestepped the issue of teaching the trickier aspects of mastering decoding, particularly in the very opaque English orthography. All of a sudden, I was on my own with thirty children all expectantly waiting for me to teach them to read, and it dawned on me that I really did not know how to do this. My class became joint learners with me, and most got to read as well was as expected by the end of the year. However, a few seemed to remain completely at a loss about the whole reading process, and try as I might, I could not get them started on their reading journey, and it really bothered me: I felt I had let them down, and let myself down by not being competent enough. Ever since then, I have been on a mission to learn as much as I could about how to help those who find the early steps in reading particularly difficult.

1.2. Moving into support teaching

I took advantage of a career break to have a family to train as a specialist dyslexia teacher, as this role had the potential to answer some of my questions about how children actually learn to read. The dyslexia training did answer a lot of questions for me, as it looked at reading as a set of sub-skills that have to be mastered and co-ordinated to work together, for example being able to distinguish small differences in sounds within words (phonological awareness)

or applying visual, auditory and kinaesthetic memory. We were trained to use a very structured phonics programme (Hickey, 2000), which checked for gaps in letter knowledge and used over-learning to boost memory, but it was used in conjunction with texts individually chosen for the pupil we were working 1:1 with.

For over a decade, I specialised in reading support, sometimes working 1:1 as a Specialist Dyslexia Teacher, at other times working with groups in both primary and secondary schools, or supporting individual pupils with a range of additional needs. I undertook the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator qualification, and worked as Assistant SENDCo in Park Road Primary School (a pseudonym) for four years, where I was able to collaborate with colleagues who had training in Reading Recovery (Clay, 1991), and also influence the provision for reading support throughout the school. This breadth of experience helped me to see the different points along the learning-to-read journey at which children commonly stumbled, whatever their learning history so far, and to try a large range of different resources, including making up my own if what I needed did not exist already. I had also seen at close hand the emotional damage that reading difficulties cause, both in making the individual feel that they are a "failure", and also in making them worried that they will be excluded from many activities, not only in the classroom but also socially and in the world of work in the future: Burden (2005) documents very well the stories of how several young people are affected in similar ways by their reading difficulties.

One aspect of the dyslexia course that really struck me was that teachers embark on it not so much to learn some new skills, but to 'become' a dyslexia teacher. Woolhouse (2012) found that many specialist teachers had childhood experiences of overcoming barriers to learning themselves, or had supported their own children to do so, and that these sort of early experiences are one of the contributing factors to what she characterises as the "caring warrior" stance shared by so many of the specialist teachers that she studied. In addition, she highlights how the training for the role of specialist teacher involves gradually joining a different "community of practice" from class teachers, with different priorities and different skills and practices, also contributing to the "caring warrior", which is typified by an empathetic approach to pupils coupled with a strong desire to protect and advocate for them (Woolhouse, 2012). Kearns

(2005) characterised this role as “rescuer” in his study of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, again illustrating the strong emotional investment of support teaching. Griffiths (2016) points out that specialist teachers can sometimes over-identify with the “rescuer” role, thus building up a ‘them-and-us’ relationship with non-specialist colleagues, making it less likely that they are asked to provide training or advice to other staff.

The concept of “rescuer” really resonated with me, and I have felt a huge responsibility as a specialist teacher to ‘save’ those children that no-one else knows how to support, which can be a strong flow of intensity in a support teaching context. This approach has been criticised for perpetuating the ‘deficit’ model of children with additional needs: Thorius (2016) writes that specialist teaching is based on the view that remediation is required in order to bring such pupils nearer to the ideal of the ‘normal child’. However, from my own view as a practitioner, my motivation was the pragmatic one of lessening the distress for pupils who were struggling in a classroom situation, and, while I would ideally have liked to be able to change the education system to better address the needs of all pupils, realistically I had a significantly greater chance of success in trying to help the pupils in front of me cope more happily with the existing situation.

1.3. Unanswered questions

Although I felt I had a better grasp of teaching the technical aspects of reading by this point, there were still aspects which remained elusive. I knew I was able to boost my pupils’ confidence but could not clearly articulate how I did it. I knew empathy was crucial, and that working with materials that the learner enjoyed was more important than keeping to a set programme, but could not justify this logically. I had experienced the joy of all the separate aspects of a teaching programme coming together and a child really taking off with their reading skills, but had no conventional professional term to describe what to me felt like a little bit of ‘magic’. I had done a course in counselling skills and felt that the therapeutic effect of unconditional positive regard was also present in good 1:1 support, but it was no more than a strong inkling. Colleagues in school commented on how much I was boosting my pupils’ confidence, and working to do this was very much an instinctive response to seeing how much emotional damage was occurring due to struggling with learning to read.

My experience in a range of different schools left me feeling very strongly that the children who seemed least well supported by the current educational system were those who were less confident with their language skills. This concern was shared by several others on my SENDCo course, who, like me, would have liked to use one of the assignments to find out more about how to help these pupils specifically with the academic skills in school. However, most of the literature in initial searches seemed to focus on language development, and the sorts of interventions that Speech and Language Therapists that would deliver, with the assumption that school-based skills would develop in due course once the children's language skills had 'caught up'. While this may well have been the case, the waiting time would ensure that the gap between these pupils and their peers was growing steadily wider, and the emotional consequences greater. I felt that the dyslexia programme was ideal to boost the literacy skills of these pupils too, and began to think about applying for a part-time PhD course as a way to explore this idea more fully.

1.4. Turning these ideas into reality

My initial PhD proposal was to look at children who were continuing to really struggle to begin to learn to read. Firstly, I hoped to test my hunch that it was rooted in difficulties with the more subtle language skills that are not immediately apparent when children talk, for example phonological awareness and comprehension of more complex language constructions. Secondly, I wanted to see if I could provide evidence that the structured multi-sensory phonics programme that I had used with dyslexic children would also work effectively with these children. I had often experienced teachers and teaching assistants (T.A.s) worriedly saying that they just did not know how to help, and I wanted to produce something that would share some of the skills I had accumulated, in a way that would help with them to help their pupils. The advent, at Park Road Primary School where I was then employed, of a new Head Teacher with very different views on supporting children with additional needs, gave the impetus for me to resign my post in school, and begin my PhD.

1.5. A roadmap of my thesis

This thesis details my doctoral journey, beginning with my intended research, but providing a chronological narrative of how it changed shape. In Chapter 2, I

describe how I set out on the initial path, starting my fieldwork at a local school, which I have for anonymity called Greenfields Primary, and designing and delivering a two year Action Research exploration of my reading support intervention. I then describe how, at the end of the first year, a change of supervisor coincided with feedback from school staff about my pupils' increased self-confidence, setting me off on a whole new pathway. Chapter 3 documents the new reading I undertook as a consequence once I had finished my fieldwork, and the new directions this took me in, as I gradually became more and more immersed in posthumanist thinking, and its implications for literacy learning and teaching. Chapter 4 then discusses the implications this new reading had for my research methods and methodology, particularly the challenges posed by posthumanist questioning of representation. Chapter 5 goes on to explore how engaging with posthumanist ideas also prompted me to question what my 'data' now consisted of, as well as how to analyse it, particularly the more nebulous concepts like "flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007). In Chapters 6 and 7, I present my findings from the two years of my fieldwork, in the form of vignettes focusing on individual pupils (Chapter 6) and then my new perspectives on both the processes of beginning to learn to read for those who find it particularly challenging, and also my practice as a reading support teacher. Chapter 8 concludes this thesis with a discussion of what my original contributions to knowledge could be considered to be, what the implications of my study are for the practice of reading support teaching, and next steps for possible future research.

Chapter 2. Starting my fieldwork

2.1. Designing my study

2.1.1. Original research questions

My initial plan for my study was to identify some children whose spoken language and reading skills were significantly lower than the school expected for their age, and to use the skills I had been taught as a specialist dyslexia teacher, to see if this way of teaching reading would also help children who had not had a formal 'diagnosis' of dyslexia. I had been doing this informally as part of my practice as a reading support teacher, and it had been regarded by colleagues as being effective, so I was hoping to find a way to demonstrate this less subjectively. I was particularly concerned about those children who did not have such severe language difficulties that they experienced problems with everyday communication, and thus came under the umbrella of the Speech and Language Therapy services, but whose understanding of more complex language was not at a level for them to engage fully in class activities. In my practice, I had noticed that children in this situation were very likely not only to make especially slow progress in learning to read, but that they were often also struggling more and more as they went up school across a wide range of subjects, and, as a consequence, sometimes starting to develop behaviour issues born out of frustration. I began my enquiry with the hope that I could adapt the dyslexia programme with additional story based activities to add more language development delivered through puppets and other artefacts. My original research question and aims were:

***Original research question*:** How can "multisensory teaching methods" be used to teach early reading skills more effectively to children in KS1 who are making slower than expected progress with both their spoken language and Literacy skills?

Original research aims:

1) To identify the specific difficulties that these children face when attempting to engage with the KS1 Literacy curriculum
2) To clarify how the pedagogical and cognitive concepts underpinning the term 'multisensory learning' might apply to them.

3) To devise a programme that addresses their difficulties using multisensory teaching methods and trial it in a school(s) to see if substantial results can be shown by collecting data about pupil progress.
4) To refine this programme through the Action Research process of cycles of 'plan, do, review'.

However, this seemed to be focusing on two elements at once, so I opted for focusing on the dyslexia programme and how children who were also experiencing difficulties with spoken language skills responded to it, as making all the resources as well as delivering the intervention and undertaking the academic aspects seemed too time consuming.

2.1.2. Identifying the original theoretical framework for my study

Because my original research question was based strongly in my wish to answer questions raised during my practice as a reading support teacher, pragmatism seemed at first the most apt theoretical framework for my study. Pragmatism is rooted firmly in finding solutions to participants' lived experiences and problems, solutions that are valued for the difference they can make to participants' lives rather than for their ideological credentials. I felt more drawn to Dewey's interpretation of pragmatism, especially his doubts about what he called the "spectator theory of knowledge" (Sundin et al. 2005:24); the positivist stance that 'the truth' was there to be discovered by scientists using empirical methods or philosophers using abstract reasoning. Instead he used the term "instrumental truth" (Sundin et al. 2005), which was "rooted in life itself – a life that was inherently contextual, emotional and social" (Morgan 2014:1047) and in which a truth was judged against the criteria of whether it was a useful tool which helped to make a difference in practice.

Dewey, a Professor of Philosophy writing just over a hundred years ago, wrote that the two most important questions in the human experience are about the sources of individuals' beliefs and the meanings of their actions. These, he suggested, are linked in a continuous circle of in which beliefs inform actions, and actions result in experiences, which in turn inform beliefs (Morgan 2014:1046). Thus knowing becomes inseparable from either doing, or from the knower (Morgan 2014:1048). This then leads to the premise that knowledge is embedded firmly in language and communication, developed by cooperation between enquirers, which in Dewey developed in his pedagogical precepts that

education was based on communication and cooperative action (Biesta 2010). Dewey's theories about the nature of knowledge also led him to reject the "false dualism" between scientific, empirical research methods examining physical things quantitatively and more subjective, qualitative inquiry into meanings and interpretations: between "the public world of outer reality and the private world of inner thoughts" (Pring 2015:33).

Pragmatism as a consequence is often associated with mixed methods research when both quantitative and qualitative data are combined either to give a triangulated perspective or to illustrate two different aspects, and this was my approach to data collection when I began my study. This model fits well with the problem solving basis of pragmatism, as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) point out that in everyday problem-solving, people draw on a variety of different sorts of evidence and try several different approaches, either in turn or at the same time (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010:273).

2.1.3. Choosing the original methodology for my study

As I was, at this point in my study, seeing my practice from a very cognitive, teacher-centric perspective, the research method that seemed the best fit was Action Research, as it is characterised by being firmly situated in the desire to improve practice (McNiff and Whitehead 2010). Baumfield and colleagues (2008) comment that teachers often adapt curricula to suit their own pupils and contexts, innovating and problem-solving informally using the knowledge and experience they have acquired in the classroom, and Action Research is rooted in this process: this resonated very much with my own journey as a teacher. Action Research extends the 'plan, do, review' cycles which run through much classroom teaching into 'plan, act, observe, reflect', and then opens up findings to a critical audience of those interested or involved in the field (Altrichter et al. 2002). This cyclical process enables Action Research to bridge the division between theory and practice in education, because it intertwines the generation of knowledge with the development of practice, giving both equal value (Noffke and Somekh 2011:94). McAteer (2013:24) writes that most teachers are already familiar with the "intricate and reciprocal relationship" between theory and practice, as they are engaged in reflecting on their own practice, often intuitively acting on subtle feedback from pupils to adapt their lessons as they teach. It is also very closely aligned to the support teaching practice of termly learning

targets, which are evaluated and adapted jointly by the practitioner, pupil, parents and school staff.

When I began to read about Action Research, I was particularly drawn to the approach developed by McNiff and Whitehead (2010) because it focuses on the practitioner-researcher developing their own learning, which then improves their own behaviours, which then in turn contributes to others' learning and consequently their behaviours too (McNiff and Whitehead 2010:19). They believe that Action Research should not be judged against concrete outcomes, partly because of its cyclical nature in that successfully implementing any change quite often then leads to new situations and new questions arising, so no 'solution' is achieved, and partly because they dispute the "linear and two-dimensional" view of change which holds that every question will have an answer, especially one that everyone agrees with. Although this may, at first glance, seem to create tensions with the pragmatic aims of finding practical solutions to real problems, it remains within this paradigm as an ongoing process of taking multiple small steps towards finding a solution or solutions, based on a "generative transformational" view of change, of developing pre-existing latent potential, with judgement resting on how much the researcher has lived out their own values in the process (McNiff and Whitehead 2010:35).

2.2. Taking a reflexive approach to ethical considerations

Over the course of undertaking my study, my understanding of the ethical considerations involved has been continually evolving. This has been partly due to the changing ethical procedures, and consequently the training I received, of my university faculty, but also because of my developing perspectives as my theoretical framework moved to a less adult-centric stance.

When I began my research, I was steeped in the strong ethical perspectives of being a specialist dyslexia teacher. I have described in my first chapter how specialist dyslexia teachers often identify with the role of "caring warrior" (Woolhouse, 2012), as they strive for greater inclusion and a more child-centred approach to literacy teaching for those who do not find it as easy as many of their peers do, often as an aspect of furthering social justice. This meant that I was focused on more short-term ethical considerations: the potential of the intervention that was a key part of my research to boost both the literacy skills

of the children I was working with, and also their self-esteem as a consequence. I was also focused on my research as a way eventually to help other teachers increase their skills in helping similar children with their reading difficulties too, but this was an aspiration rather than a concrete plan at the time.

My University ethics procedures at this point were also centred more on the immediate consequences for the pupils of participating in my study. My University ethics approval for my fieldwork gave me permission to work with pupils to develop their literacy skills using a multisensory dyslexia programme, in the primary school my fieldwork was based in, for a period of two years, in order to ensure that I was able to collect enough data for my study. The ethics approval stipulated that I only worked with my participating pupils when they would be have been undertaking similar literacy learning activities in class, and only for three half hour sessions a week, so that I did not limit my pupils' ability to benefit fully from all the other opportunities available in school. I adhered to this very carefully, even though I thought the children would progress more with an additional half hour a week, as is traditional for dyslexia support. Confidentiality was also an important factor, so I very carefully ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms and obscuring any details that might identify the pupils or the school my fieldwork was conducted in. I also ensured that all my data, which was completely paper-based, was kept securely at my home, and would be destroyed once my thesis was completed.

I prepared information sheets based on the examples provided in the ethics application guidelines, for both staff and parents/carers, and consent forms (examples of which are in Appendix E, along with a copy of my ethics approval memo), explaining what would be involved, and how they could withdraw from the study at any point with no negative repercussions for themselves or the children. One set of parents did decline to take part: I had been working with a pupil in my preparation year, and had hoped to continue with our work, as it seemed to be very helpful. However, this pupil would then have been the only one in their year group that I worked with, which I think was a decisive factor. At the time of seeking their consent to take part in my research, the children were aged five or six, so I thought very carefully about explaining that I wanted to write about the work we did together for other teachers to read, to help them to be able to help other children with their reading, and asked them if they were

happy for me to do this. I designed their consent form to be as age-appropriate as I could, and asked a member of the school staff to complete the consent forms with them, so that it would be easier for them to refuse.

I also took my own personal ethical stance that I should strive to limit the amount of additional work that my presence might generate for the school staff, and offset this by offering additional volunteering time in the lessons between the times I was working with my pupils. I was also very mindful of any safeguarding issues that my research might raise for school, so I made sure that my research methods did not involve any of the following: taking any photos or sound recordings of the children or staff, using any of my personal electronic devices like laptop or phone in school, working one-to-one with a child when not in full sight of other adults in school or working with the children in any way that did not echo the school's approaches to behaviour and learning.

However, I began to realise that the ethical considerations of researching into my practice were much more complex, as my understanding of ethical issues in educational research became more nuanced. I began to be more aware of the possibility of my well-intentioned actions having a wider range of consequences than I initially might have supposed. Stepping in to "rescue" (Kearns, 2005) a learner from a possible lifetime of literacy difficulties, in the role of a dyslexia 'expert', can sometimes tip over into an approach of knowing what is best for a learner without taking on board their perspectives, as well as positioning their difficulties squarely in their personal deficits instead of critiquing the wider contexts they learn in (Thorius, 2016). Being a "rescuer" is also not necessarily a purely altruistic stance, either, as helping others often brings rewards for the helper as well as the person helped, in the form of boosts to self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life.

My role as a volunteer in school for the two years, providing learning support not only to the pupils in my study but to others in their class, and also general classroom support, was also more nuanced than I realised at first. My dual teacher-researcher role that meant that while the pupils could opt out of my writing about their work with me, it was not straightforward for them to opt out of working with me at all. A large part of my practice involved making my intervention enjoyable for the children, and developing good relationships, and I had never experienced a pupil not wanting to work with me before, so I worked

very hard to ensure that this continued to be the case, and that this issue did not arise. There were some times working with one of my pupils (who I have called Ben) who was not always keen to undertake some activities, but I adapted my planning to find ones that suited him better.

As I am now at the stage of completing my thesis, my university ethical guidelines have a slightly different focus. They consider not only on the need of adults to protect children, but also taking the children's perspectives into account much more, not only in the present, but also in the future, if they should come across written accounts of their experiences. They also advise working with children as much as possible in the design of the study so that they understand much more completely what is being researched, and what will be done with the information produced in this process. These new approaches sit much better with my new theoretical framework, and, with the benefit of hindsight, would have been an ideal basis to have begun my study with, as it would have been enriched by more input from the children involved. While this is obviously not possible now, I have taken up as many recommendations as possible in the writing up of my study: I have reconsidered how much personal information about any of the participants is necessary, and have used the final editing process to reduce this to what seemed to me to be the very bare minimum necessary for the study. It would have been very useful to have been able to return to school to read what I have written about each child to them, and share it with their parents and carers, to check their perceptions against mine, but sadly due to the pandemic, this has not been possible, as I have not returned to volunteering in school yet.

When I completed my initial ethics application, I was not confident that I would even be able to produce any new knowledge in order to complete my PhD, so the prospect of having an article accepted by a journal seemed a very theoretical notion, rather than a likely outcome. As a consequence, I did not at this stage fully think through the longer-term consequences for my pupils if they came across my writing about their experiences years later. Now that I am nearing this possibility, I am much more aware about the decisions I will need to make in this process. While four of the pupils I have written about have experiences very similar to those I have seen in many children of their age who find learning to read particularly challenging, the fifth one, whom I have called

Emily, has additional difficulties that are much more specific to her. I have decided that I will not write about her experiences for a wider audience unless I have the opportunity to discuss the whole process first with Emily and her parents. I will also need to anonymise any data I retain to inform any further writing.

2.3. Settling into school

2.3.1. Finding a school happy to host my fieldwork

As I was no longer working in a school, I needed to find another one that would be happy to host me, and would be suitable for my study. I had some links to people who worked at a local school, Greenfields Primary (a pseudonym), and I was able to negotiate access. All my fieldwork was conducted in Greenfields Primary, working closely with one member of staff for most of the time.

The school is situated in a semi-rural area, on the edge of a small town. It is a modern building surrounded by grassed playing fields and green trees. The ethos of the school is very friendly and caring, with parents welcomed in to chat with teachers if they need to. It has lower numbers than average of children who speak English as their second language, and children with additional needs, and perhaps as a consequence, these were considered their weaker areas in their most recent Ofsted inspection. It also has lower than average numbers of children who are supported by pupil premium.

2.3.2. Preparatory time – Getting to know the school (January – July 2017)

From January to July 2017, I spent time getting to know the school and the staff and children, and planning with them for the work I would be doing there for my study. I had permission from the Head Teacher to conduct my research over the following two years as a volunteer in school, also providing general support as required.

2.3.3. Building relationships at Greenfields Primary

My liaison with school was through Sue (a pseudonym for confidentiality), who, as an experienced classroom teacher in the school leadership team, was to supervise my work in school, and to be my main liaison contact. I worked initially with children in Sue's class, who needed some additional support with their reading, and she helped me with the process of selecting participants for

my study. Sue asked to be kept fully informed of my plans, and about the progress made by children I was working with, as she was of course still responsible for their well-being and academic achievement.

Before I started my fieldwork, I began with some voluntary work for the spring and summer terms (January to July 2017) in Sue's class, in a T.A. role, carrying out the tasks requested by Sue: hearing the readers she was most concerned about for ten minutes each, supporting groups of children with class activities and doing a variety of 'helping' tasks like keeping the pencils sharp, sticking work into books and laminating resources. This was an important step in developing relationships within the school: as a PhD student I was very much a "stranger" in Bauman's sense of not belonging to any familiar groups in a social setting (Månsson and Langmann, 2010).

This initial six months was not only an opportunity to establish myself as a welcome and helpful guest rather than a threat to the status quo but was also an ethical decision, on two counts. Firstly, I knew from being a class teacher myself that any extra adults in the classroom involves additional time and planning for a teacher, so I felt it was right to help Sue in return, especially as she did not have a full time T.A. to support her at this point. Secondly, it also established me as a familiar presence in the Infant part of school, who 'helped' a wide range of children, so that those who would become part of my study later would not be likely to feel that they were different or stigmatised in any way because of it.

2.3.4. A day in the life of the school

I really enjoyed my time in Greenfields Primary: the school prided itself on its caring ethos, and did seem to act on those values, as there did seem to me to be a general feeling of happiness around school. The classrooms lined two corridors, one for the younger children in the Infants (aged 5 – 7) and one for the Juniors (aged 7 – 11), and both corridors had interesting and visually appealing displays of the children's work, including both artwork and writing. I was based in the Infant part of school, which shared a joint timetable, enabling phonics lessons to be grouped according to ability across the entire age range, with smaller groups for those deemed less confident. Maths lessons were based on a scheme that school had paid to join. Literacy lessons were based

on some colourful and well-known children's books, which were explored in depth over a couple of weeks: I particularly enjoyed the more active literacy lessons when stories were acted out, or 'story maps' were drawn, illustrating how the narrative of the story unfolded. The teachers planned literacy jointly for each year group, and linked in additional activities, for example adapting the small imaginative play areas in each classroom, and going for walks outside the school grounds into the surrounding local area. Group reading lessons involved the class being split into five ability groups, with the teacher working with one each day, while the rest of the class worked independently in their groups on activities like handwriting practice or phonics games, the most popular being free reading in the book corner. The afternoons were filled with the rest of the curriculum, including P.E., history, geography, R.E. and art, but I did not stay for any of these lessons.

2.3.5. Finding a space to work in

As Sue was part of the school leadership team, she had a small office next to her classroom, which she had sole use of. She was happy for me to use her office for my lessons, unless it was needed for meetings. She had a big desk, which she kept clear of paperwork, and which could seat myself and two children side by side quite comfortably. This made a huge difference, particularly in the phonics slot, when every nook or cranny within school was occupied by small phonics groups. The door had a large glass window, and was on a busy corridor, so we had peace and quiet, but without safeguarding worries. At the times when I could not use it, it was noticeably much harder to use all my resources effectively and to get the children to focus, especially if the only space I could find was on the sofas by the school entrance, so I really appreciated the office when I was able to use it.

2.3.6. Being both an insider and an outsider

Being back in school in a T.A. role felt very comfortable to me. Having spent decades in primary school environments, the rhythm of a school day was still part of my own internal body clock. I was still tuned in to the 'register' of primary school staffroom talk, and my wardrobe was still full of similar clothes to those worn in school, which again helped me to blend in (Merton, 1972). I understood and shared many of the expected patterns of behaviour, emotions and

pressures commonly experienced school staff, so knew what to offer to do to help and how to do it. I felt in many ways very much an “insider” in this setting. However, I was not a member of staff, and this meant that I was also in many other ways an “outsider”, not included in official staff briefings, or in unofficial conversations about internal tensions or conjectures about longer term school plans. The fact that I was in school on an unpaid basis, as a researcher, with my own agenda of interests and needs, made me very different from all the other adults in school, although I often felt uncomfortable still in the role of ‘researcher’, which was very new and unfamiliar to me.

At first I considered my position within school in these “insider/outsider” terms, but the binary distinction between the two did not seem to fit my situation, as I did not truly feel an “insider” in school, or as a researcher, but also felt emotional pulls to both that made it hard to take a completely “outsider” stance. Later, when I began to read about ethnography as a possible methodology, I came across the work of Beals and colleagues, who used a term which best seems to me to describe my status in school: “edgewalker” (Beals et al. 2020). An “edgewalker” is someone who walks in the margins of two or more worlds, trying to balance maintaining their own unique identity with adapting to the various worlds around them that they are living in. I did feel very much in the margins of both school and academia, and navigating my path in borders of these two worlds did seem to be feel, as Beals et al. (2020) comment, a little on the risky side, as I did not have a clear set of expectations of how to behave in this position.

Some elements of researching as an insider/outsider, or as an “edgewalker”, are performative, in that the researcher consciously adopts a strategy to secure their place as an “insider” in the community they wish to study, while still carrying out the activities they need to do as a researcher (Adu-Ampong and Adams, 2019). An important part of this was being very mindful of the balance I needed to make in terms of behaviour management strategies, as it was possible to be a little more relaxed in a 1:1 setting when I was delivering my intervention as a researcher, but then I went back into class and was working with bigger groups, I had to be a bit more ‘teacherly’ in my style. McInch (2020) writes about the need for a researcher to have a more “fluid persona”, especially when researching into different aspects of a school’s life, to adapt to

the different situations they find themselves in, but it did not always sit comfortably with me to feel that I was much more consciously 'performing' my role in school than I did when I had been just fully a member of staff in a school.

As my study evolved, I began to feel less that I had to choose between belonging to the two different worlds of school or research (and fearing that I did not belong to either), and more that I was making my own identity as a "teacher researcher", finding my own version of a third space which combined elements of both together, following in the footsteps of the many teachers who had become education researchers too (Singibjorg and Puroila, 2018). Kennedy-Lewis (2012) discusses the usefulness of 'self-narrative' in this process: writing about their strategies to bridge the two cultures helps teacher-researchers to clarify how they can combine their tacit professional knowledge and understandings with their research aims, without also retaining unchallenged assumptions from their classroom days. I did indeed find that writing in my research diary helped me in clarifying both my 'teacher' skills and my 'researcher' thinking as required.

2.4. Collecting data for my study (September 2017 – April 2019)

2.4.1. My data sources

As my study began as a traditional mixed methods study (Plano Clark and Cresswell, 2008), I collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the first year of my fieldwork. In the second year, I continued with only the qualitative data. All my data sources are described in the table below:

My data sources	Description
Termly plans Years 1 & 2 of my fieldwork	Individual plans for each child, outlining my learning aims and strategies to achieve them.
Individual lesson plans and evaluations Years 1 & 2 of my fieldwork	Traditional 1:1 dyslexia teaching lesson plans, detailing the elements of each section of the lesson, the resources, and a summary of the teaching indicated for the next lesson.
Research journal Years 1 & 2 of my fieldwork	Reflexive and reflective diary completed at the end of each day's teaching

Feedback from school staff Years 1 & 2 of my fieldwork	Twice yearly semi-structured interviews with the class teacher of each pupil.
Pre- and post-study pupil assessment data Year 1 only	Bank of tests to form an initial profile of spoken language and literacy skills, repeat to measure progress over the course of the intervention.

Table 1: Data Sources

2.4.2. Lesson plans and evaluations

As I was using the Hickey multi-sensory teaching programme (Hickey,2000) that I had been trained in as a specialist dyslexia teacher (which I described in the Introduction), I continued to use the correspondingly very structured lesson planning sheets, to ensure that all the recommended components of a lesson were covered. As I generally only had 20 minutes rather than an hour, I had to adapt accordingly, so one sheet often covered three sessions. Each sheet had sections to evaluate the teaching points covered and to identify the next steps to be taken. I also added pictures of sad, neutral or smiley faces, for the children to colour in according to their responses to questions I asked them about emotional issues like how happy or confident or proud they felt. However, I did not always use them, as they did not seem to give me any more information than I had already perceived, and unfortunately sometimes gave the pupils the idea that I was offering them choices according to their responses, when I did not intend to do this. These sheets formed part of my data, as they included my reflections, as well as information about pupil progress, and I have included an example of a typical unevaluated lesson plan as Appendix C.

2.4.3. Termly planning

My lesson plans were based on the traditional SEND practice of having Individual Learning Plans for a term for each child, an example of which is included as Appendix D, with specific targets set in three or four areas of literacy knowledge or skills, and measureable criteria to know if the targets had been met or not. The ILPs were shared with the class teacher, SENDCo, parents and, less formally, the pupil. I was careful always to choose targets I was pretty confident we could attain, to ensure that the pupil had a sense of achievement, but with enough challenge to ensure at the same time that progress with skills was happening. I used the school's PM "Benchmarking"

reading assessments (produced in Australia in 2009 by Croft, Nelley and Smith for Cengage Learning), small booklets with a short text to read and then comprehension questions for a more rounded view of reading skills. These booklets went up in quite small steps in skills, so the children could see their own progress very clearly. The pupils were generally very keen to have a go at doing this, as long as I made sure that we waited until I was fairly certain that they would be ready to 'go up' a level, as the class teacher and I then made it a source of much praise and celebration. The "Benchmarking" assessments were not currently being used by anyone else in school, which meant that I could make positive comparisons for the children, focusing on their own gains in learning in a short time, with no negative comparisons with their peers who found learning to read much easier.

2.4.4. Research journal

In addition, I also kept a research diary, which was far less structured, to capture the more qualitative elements of my study: how I thought both my pupils and myself felt about the intervention. I have included a transcript of one day's diary entry as Appendix B. Altrichter and Holly (2005) provide a very detailed discussion of the many ways a research diary can be used, and what might be recorded in them. They can include a mixture of records of observations, collections of material objects like examples of work, reflections, notes about context, or notes about planning. They can form not only a chronological account of events, but be used as a space in which to write descriptive passages and as an interpretive tool, to consider both practice and methodological considerations (Altrichter and Holly, 2005:24). I used a spiral bound notebook, so that I could write extensively if one particular lesson seemed to warrant it, or just briefly when a day was quite uneventful. Handwriting my journal seemed to keep the process feeling more personal: I associate typing into a document on my laptop with producing more formal pieces of writing that will be scrutinised by others. As the more practical information was recorded in my lesson plans, I used my diary in a much more reflexive way, trying to be really honest about my own emotional reactions, the children's verbal and non-verbal responses, and my thought processes about how I adapted my teaching in the light of my reflections on the learning activities I had just done.

Keeping my journal entirely private, apart from the excerpts I used later in my analysis processes, helped me to explore my all my emotions, including self-doubts and moments of despair, which I would have been loath to make public, especially at the time of writing. Being a person who is very hard on themselves came in very handy, probably the first time ever, in this process, as I have had a lot of experience in identifying all the areas I could have improved upon. On the other hand, I am probably not so astute in identifying what had gone well, or attributing this to anything that I had done. I found this writing process very helpful, both professionally as well as personally, especially when I was not so sure of my next steps, as I found that taking the time to commit my thoughts to paper was often very helpful in clarifying them. I realised that when I continued to support one of my pupils as a volunteer after my fieldwork had ended, and I no longer kept a research diary, that I felt noticeably less focused.

2.4.5. Observing as a participant researcher

I also used my research diary to record my observations of the children from a wider perspective than the lesson plans allowed for. However, the nature of observations made of pupils while teaching are not the same as those made by someone whose role is primarily to observe, who is able to record their observations as they happen, and whose focus is fully on the event unfolding before them. As a participant researcher, it can be hard for a teacher to take detailed notes at the time (Yin, 2014) so they may have to rely on what they can remember later when they come to write up their research notes, which tends to be the moments which had a bigger impact rather than details. In addition, the teaching process requires being present in the moment to notice all the small signs which indicate how a lesson is progressing, while also remembering information about the pupil's past learning in the area being tackled, and calculating forward to the next steps, so a participant teacher may not have the same ability to focus on a broader picture of what is happening overall.

On the other hand, a teacher-researcher has a pre-existing knowledge of the child or children, and an established relationship, so they have a contextual framework in which to think about their observations (Campbell et al. 2004). This can be helpful because they have a deep understanding of a child, and the significance of an event in their emotional or learning development, or it can be detrimental if it is coloured by past habits of interactions that see new

developments only as part of the same patterns. The observations of the children recorded in my diary included anything that seemed significant in both learning and emotional responses. Sometimes I attempted to analyse the event at the time, because I needed to do this to work out my response in the next lesson, but sometimes I recorded it as something that felt important but remained puzzling, and I returned to think about it more in my data analysis process.

Participant observation, Menter et al. (2011) point out, covers a continuum from total participation in the setting, in a mode bordering onto anthropology, to sharing some spaces and experiences, but having roles delineated in some way from those they are observing, and as a visitor within school I was more towards the latter end of the continuum. All points along the continuum have both advantages and disadvantages in terms of observation: those who belong very closely to the situation they are observing can often have insights and contextual knowledge not easily accessed by others, but on the other hand, might be too absorbed in habitual ways of doing things to look with fresh eyes, as someone less involved may be able to. However, participant observation does offer a unique way to explore the tacit, intuitive or felt knowledge (Creswell, 2009) that is unique to the setting being observed.

2.4.6. Feedback from school staff

I included feedback from school staff as a form of triangulation (Creswell, 2009), alongside my own observations and my quantitative data from before and after testing, in my research design. I used semi-structured interviews, part way through the academic year, and then at the end of my time working with the children in each year of the study. As Sue and I had been talking through how everything was going informally as we went, the semi-structured interview felt appropriate and natural. I gave Sue an indication of the questions in advance (some sample questions are included as Appendix G), and wrote down her answers as we spoke, which I felt gave some transparency to my recording of the interviews for the teachers. I left the order, the exact wording, and any follow-up questions flexible, so that the interview was more natural and conversation-like (McAteer, 2013). This was partly because it would have felt very stilted and uncomfortable to adopt a formal approach when we talked every day in school, and partly because I wanted the freedom to follow up

anything unexpected that arose in the interview. I gave Sue the main questions in advance, which kept an element of structure, as I was interested in her considered opinion, which would have been harder for her to formulate if I had 'put her on the spot'. These interviews felt very reminiscent to me of taking part in parent-teacher appointments, both as a teacher and as a parent, in which I was being presented with accurate account of Sue's perceptions, but delivered in a very tactfully curated way. If I had been a member of staff, and therefore an 'insider' in school, I feel I would have been given more open responses. In contrast to my intense focus on literacy skills in a 1:1 setting, Sue was able to give a more 'helicopter' view, including any changes in how pupils approached other areas of learning, any differences in how they interacted with other people in school, and any developments in how they seemed in themselves.

In addition, I also received more informal feedback from Sue throughout the study, in the form of comments about how the children were getting on, or when I ran ideas about possible activities past her, and she gave her perspective on how they might impact on her whole class teaching, and I recorded these in my research diary. Because she was interested in my project, and in the progress of the pupils, Sue was acting very much in the role of "critical friend", as described by McNiff and Whitehead (2009): a colleague who was willing to be both a sounding board and a reality check for the practitioner.

2.5. Planning my reading intervention.

2.5.1. The reading support intervention at the heart of my study

The reading support intervention at the heart of both years of my study was based on the Hickey Multisensory Structured teaching programme (Hickey, 2000) that I had been trained to use as part of my Postgraduate Diploma in teaching children with specific literacy difficulties (dyslexia). The programme starts from the very beginning of learning to read. One phonogram is added at a time, each with its own cue card with a picture prompt of the child's choosing. The child works on both recognising the letter visually, identifying it with its sound, and the reverse process of writing the letter when they hear the sound. As the child gradually builds up a collection of letters, words are made by blending the letters together, and they practise both reading and writing the words. Common irregular words are added gradually too, especially very

common ‘tricky’ words like ‘said’. In each lesson, the child practises both reading and writing their existing letters before a new one is added, so that the overlearning helps fixes the letters and letter-sound combinations in both short and long term memory. Other activities regularly included are those based on learning alphabetical order, for example laying out letters in an alphabetical arc, and boosting memory skills, often in the shape of simple homemade games. I have included a typical lesson plan as Appendix D.

Although, in the pure form, reading activities are based only on the letters learned so far, I also included some reading activities based on books I felt the children could read with some independence. I tried to avoid the school reading books, as the colour coding proclaimed their slower progress, and they had already read the entire collection more than once. I had some of my own books at home, but not enough, so had to supplement these by making my own little books from A4 sheets of paper, to target words I wanted the children to learn. I also added to the programme my bronze, silver and gold ‘awards’ for sight learning of the first 45 high frequency words. I used cue cards, and awarded stickers for each set of five that could be recognised straight away, then I made a certificate to take home once each set of 15 were learned. I had found this really helped both to change habits of sounding out even familiar words as they had become accustomed to do in phonics lessons, and also to bring a small degree of fluency in reading simple stories, which really added to the enjoyment of the story as well as giving a sense of competency quite soon. I initially worked with each child 1:1, but tried pairs with some children to see if I felt that might suit them better.

2.5.2. Sorting out my timetable

As my ethics permission stipulated that I could only work with my pupils when they would be doing similar activities anyway, I had two possible slots in the day: phonics and group reading. I did not take them out of their guided reading session with Sue or their time in the book corner, which was the most popular alternative activity. Keeping to my policy of trying to help school as well as expecting them to help me, I spent the rest of the morning acting as a T.A. in maths and literacy, mainly helping the pupils who were my participants, because they were the most in need of support in class in those lessons.

Time	Lesson	My Role
8.50 – 9.05	Register	Setting up time, sometimes reading with a non-intervention pupil
9.05 – 9.30	Phonics groups	1:1 intervention
9.30 – 10.15	Maths	Supporting in class
10.15 – 10.30	Playtime	Prepare for next lesson
10.30 – 11.00	Group reading	1:1 intervention
11.00 – 12.00	Literacy	Supporting pupils in class
12.00	Lunchtime	Tidy up then go home

Table 2: School morning timetable

2.5.3. Selecting my participants for Year 1 of my fieldwork

Consulting with Sue, we identified four children who would be in her class in the next academic year, who would turn seven in the course of that year. I did some initial assessments with them, keeping everything very relaxed and framing them as games to play, or things to "help Mrs Smith with". I usually began my work with a pupil by establishing a baseline in literacy knowledge and skills, so that I could both demonstrate progress, and identify where our first steps in learning should begin, and this information would also form the quantitative part of my original mixed methods research design. I drew from tests that were available from both my own and school's resources, looking at norm referenced reading and spelling skills, vocabulary knowledge, verbal and non-verbal reasoning, and sequencing skills. I used these to write profiles of the children's strengths and areas of development which I shared with school, who felt that they would also benefit from these insights. I also did some additional profiling of some other children that Sue wanted to know more about, but did not have enough time to assess in detail.

This took a few weeks to complete, as I only did a few tasks at a time, so that it was not overwhelming for the children. In the meanwhile, I supported the children in class with their other morning lessons, so that I could get to know them, and they would get to know me. In the end, I decided that only three were suitable for inclusion in my study, as one had some mild additional difficulties, but as they generally worked as a small group in the classroom, it seemed to be ethically important to treat all four equally, and give the same reading support to all of them whether they were in the study or not. However, I did not collect any

data about the child not in the study, although I produced much of the same paperwork for Sue's information.

2.5.4. Finishing Year 1 of my fieldwork

I worked with the pupils in the initial year of my fieldwork from October 2017 until June 2018, as my intervention was their support provision for that academic year. I decided to finish my intervention in June, after consultation with Sue, as the children began to focus on other issues like moving up to the Junior part of school the next year, and more outdoor activities like Sports Day. I left time at the end to repeat most of the initial assessments, to measure how much progress the pupils had made, to complete my quantitative data. I wrote up my findings for each pupil and gave Sue a copy for her pupil files, and so that she could feed back to the parents as part of Parents' Evening in school, as she thought this was most appropriate. I was very pleased with the progress all my pupils had made, as they seemed to have reached a point when they could start to read stories they enjoyed, particularly the Oxford Reading Tree "Magic Key" stories, which always marked in my head the point when the hardest part of 'cracking the alphabetic code' had been achieved. My intention was then to expand upon the reports I had written for Sue for each pupil, in order to write them as "exploratory" case studies (Yin, 2014), adding more "thick description" (Yin, 2014) to explore how each pupil had seemed to experience and benefitted from the multisensory teaching programme.

2.6. Crucial feedback at the end of Year 1 of my fieldwork

It was at this point, on June 19th 2018, that I conducted my second interview with Sue, and one question in particular caused me to rethink my focus for my study. I asked Sue whether she could see enough benefit from the intervention I had done to use school resources to fund staffing for it. She said that it would be hard to justify it in terms of pupil progress, for although they had made considerable progress, they were still considered in the school assessment framework as remaining in the category of "below expected levels for their age", so their progress did not officially 'count', which was very disappointing, and also quite disquieting. She then added that she could justify the expenditure because their confidence had increased "tenfold", and with it, their engagement in lessons across the curriculum.

This feedback hit me like a thunderbolt: lack of confidence has dogged me for the whole of my life, and had led me to always be very mindful of my pupils' experiences in this area, and to take opportunities whenever I could to build their self-confidence. I had long been convinced that the efficacy of the 1:1 dyslexia support was due to more than just the structured teaching programme, and that it had its roots in relationships and re-establishing positive associations with literacy learning, and building self-confidence, but I had just thought of it as a bit of "magic", for want of any more specific description.

This was a pivotal moment, as it seemed to point to two different possible ways to go forward. On the one hand, I could continue with my more conventional, cognitively based, Action Research consideration of my study, following a safer, but probably much too frequently trod path for my study to be very new or different from much published before. On the other hand, I could leave behind the question of spoken language proficiency, and venture out to explore less conventional perspectives on learning to read, including emotions, self-confidence and relationships, which would also entail using newer approaches to my data analysis. Of these two choices, the latter was the one that really interested me, not only from a professional perspective, but also because it resonated so much with my own life story. It also coincided with my original Director of Studies, Dr Gee McCrory, who is a language and linguistics expert, retiring, and Professor Kate Pahl becoming my new Supervisor, bringing new perspectives in social anthropology, community literacies and arts methodologies.

Following this train of enquiry would mean exploring ideas outside of my comfort zone, and taking new theoretical approaches to my study, which seemed both a more interesting prospect, and also a more daunting one, not least because the Literature Review and Methodology I had written already would no longer be relevant. On the other hand, it opened up possibilities for exploring some of the elements of my practice which had been intriguing me for a while, but had proved elusive to describe in conventional support teaching terms: to unpick what the "magic" might be.

I began to read a whole new tranche of authors, and to explore how I could investigate the links between confidence, early literacy skills, and my practice as a reading support teacher. This reading, and its contribution to the

formulation of new research aims, is discussed in the next chapter. In the chapter following it, I explore how I adapted my initial methods and developed new ones as part of a methodology appropriate for my new focus and research aims. After this, I present my data in the form of a series of vignettes, before considering the themes that seem to arise as a response to my research questions. I had set off on a journey which would open new doors that would increase my understanding not only of myself as a practitioner but also as a person.

Chapter 3. Exploring a whole new field of literature

In this chapter, I describe the literature that informed my journey towards the development of my new research questions. I begin with a general introduction to posthumanist ideas, which helped me to see my teaching practice from new perspectives. I then discuss the work of four writers, whose ideas may not necessarily have been rooted in educational contexts, but whose theoretical approaches have opened up ways of thinking for me: Kathleen Stewart (2007), Jane Bennett (2001, 2010), Karen Barad (2007) and Giles Deleuze (1987). I explore their ideas, and then discuss how they have been built upon by other writers working in contexts relevant to my work in reading support. After that, I discuss the writing of Burnett and Merchant (2016, 2017,2018a&b) whose fresh perspectives on literacies have been particularly informative for my study, before finishing with a section on the literature around listening to children, which I gradually became to value more and more as I began to analyse my data.

The first steps of this reading journey began in the summer of 2018, when both the focus of my study and my supervisory team changed, continued slowly as I worked with the pupils in the second year of my fieldwork (from October 2018 to April 2019), and then really took off when I began the process of analysing my data, and needed to reconsider this in the light of my new research questions. Previously in my practice, I had tried interventions based on resilience-boosting, but did not feel that they had made a noticeable difference. This approach also positioned lack of self-confidence in the deficit model, as something that the pupil themselves had failed to develop and needed to remedy, rather than looking at the wider learning contexts. The more cognitively based literature review I had completed for my original research questions (see p.11) had included Burdon's (2005) book about the negative impact of struggling with reading skills on self-esteem, but which did not address reversing this

I therefore began an exploration of texts that seemed to shed light on the more elusive, affective elements of my practice. It gradually became clear that most of these texts were associated with new materialist and posthumanist thinkers, which enabled me to think in new ways about these aspects. The new perspectives on literacy teaching and learning that I was developing in this process enabled me to identify my new research questions as:

RQ1: What are the implicit, “more than cognitive”, strategies and skills that I employ as a reading support practitioner alongside the explicit cognitive elements of my teaching programme?

RQ2: What are the emotions that seem to be experienced by pupils who are finding acquiring early reading skills particularly difficult, and how do they change as they are supported in developing these skills?

3.1. Posthumanist perspectives: exploring “other ways of knowing/becoming/doing literacies”

Posthumanist enquiry seemed suited to my aim of trying to find out how my pupils gained so much new confidence in themselves in the course of our literacy lessons because of its potential, as Braidotti (2013:195) argued, for exploring who we are capable of becoming and what can be reinvented creatively and positively. Applied to the sphere of literacy research, it opens up opportunities to think about “other ways of knowing/becoming/doing literacies” and other ways to define what counts as literacy, as well as new ways to research these ideas (Kuby et al, 2019:5). Posthumanism does not, as Kuby et al. (2019) pointed out, set up in opposition to humanism, or to the socio-cultural perspectives that went before it, but instead builds on these, decentring the human to make room for the consideration of the contribution of materials, animals, time and space, and the environment, and then “braids knowing/becoming/doing with critical and creative valances” (Kuby et al 2019:6). It also decentres cognitive thought processes to consider the flows of affect between people and/or materials, and explores what happens in the spaces in between these different elements. The work of the authors I discuss below informed both the theoretical framework of my main study, and the methodology I developed to think about what I had experienced in my fieldwork.

As I explore how their ideas have been applied to pedagogy by authors with experience in different fields of educational practice, and discuss the relevance of these to my study, I have borrowed the concept of “thinking with” different writer’s ideas from Jackson and Mazzei (2012), who developed this approach because they felt that merely attempting to identify themes constrained the data artificially, but viewing the same data from different perspectives enabled a richer analysis to be undertaken. This seemed very apt to me because the main

criterion for selecting literature for this chapter was that it changed or expanded my thinking about my study, in a way that was in accord with the diffractive methodology that I later adopted.

3.2. Kathleen Stewart, affect theory and pedagogy

3.2.1. Thinking with Kathleen Stewart about affect theory

My journey through this literature began when I read Kathleen Stewart's book "Ordinary Affects" (2007). Stewart is an anthropologist, who combined ethnography and storytelling in vignettes describing scenes from everyday American life, in which intensities between people and around events jump out as being both ordinary but also about something more far reaching. This book really struck me because it pinpointed how moments could seem particularly intense or significant, in a way that is not always immediately apparent why, but just as "something that feels like *some*thing" (Stewart 2007:2). This resonated with experiences from my practice: Stewart wrote about moments that seem meaningful, not in "the "obvious meaning" of semantic message and symbolic significance" (Stewart, 2007:3), but more because they build in intensity, picking up "density and texture", and make feelings and thoughts possible (Stewart, 2007:3). This reminded me of lessons when something significant seemed to happen, and learning suddenly shifted, or emotions seemed to change gear. Sometimes these could be the "wow!" moments of the sort depicted in teacher recruitment adverts, when a child's face lights up with new understanding and accompanying joy, but they could also be the moments when I had to acknowledge to myself that I was on the wrong track and needed to try something completely new.

Stewart (2007) wrote that these moments can be born out of tension; out of difference and disconnection as much as out of affinity and connection, and that the agency involved is not always of a linear, project-management sort, but can instead take many forms, including passivity or exhaustion. Stewart called these moments "ordinary affects", and describes them as "a kind of contact zone" (Stewart 2007:3) in which problems or questions move circuits and flows of potentiality, to jump together for a moment, and then spread out in "lines of resonance or connection" (Stewart 2007:4). Although these moments of affect may trigger internal emotions within the participants, they are essentially about

the flows between those involved. It seemed much more feasible for my study to write about the intensities and textures I felt between myself and the learners than to try to write with any authority about the emotions felt by anyone apart from myself. This thinking seemed to provide not only a potential theoretical framework in which to explore these non-cognitive aspects of support teaching, but also a way to use language to describe them vividly. An example of this is when Stewart wrote about “little seeds of anxiety” starting to sprout (Stewart 2007:29), which really seems to capture how little worries can suddenly take over the mind when they are given some attention.

Stewart wrote about identity as being even more fluid still: that identities “take place” (Stewart 2007:15) as ordinary affects either spark new possibilities or settle new ways of thinking into becoming established habits. In my practice, I had observed that pupils who saw themselves as a ‘good reader’ were more likely to express positive emotions about engaging in literacy activities, in contrast to many of my pupils, whose struggles had resulted in them developing an identity as someone who was ‘no good at reading’. A sense of self, Stewart wrote, can be even more volatile, a “dreamy, hovering, not-quite-there thing” that “enfolds the intensities it finds itself in” (Stewart 2007:58), again suggesting that the intensities in the ordinary affects of a 1:1 lesson could easily change how both participants come to see themselves, for good or for bad. While she was describing events in every day American life rather than in a classroom, Stewart (2007) saw affects as important prompts to learning opportunities, because they can trigger ideas or questions that look for answers.

Thinking with Kathleen Stewart changed my perspectives on the affective elements of teaching quite radically. Before, I saw them more as either rewards, when everything went well and everyone had a warm glow of success and happiness, or as obstacles to be overcome, when pupils were unhappy and despondent, and I needed to turn this around. After reading “Ordinary Affects”, I began to see that learning happened as much through these affective moments as much as from the literacy activities themselves, either when I learnt how to adapt my teaching more closely to the needs of that pupil by paying attention to the affective flows around the activities or between us, or when we found a strong flow of positive affect that helped generate some big steps in learning.

3.2.2. Affect theory and reading support teaching.

Affect theory seemed to offer a very useful framework through which to explore the affective aspects of learning to read, because it focuses on illuminating what is experienced, together as well as separately, rather than attempting to measure or explain. In their introduction to their book about affect in literacy learning and teaching, Leander and Ehret (2019) describe very vividly the role of affect in school settings:

> … we wish to tell out loud the secret that teachers seem to know – that most of what happens, on our best days, cannot be explained in rational frames. We are moved, and our students are moved, and we cannot explain just how or why. (Leander and Ehret, 2019:2).

Gregg and Seigworth (2010) described affect as being a force that is other than conscious knowing that impels us towards action or thought, or alternatively inaction, and is felt more as resonances or intensities. Affect is a difficult concept to explain, but Gregg and Seigworth (2010:1) do this very effectively for me when the write that it "arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacity to act and be acted upon" and add that:

> At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between "bodies" (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010:2) (italics in original)

Alyssa Niccolini (2016) took this one step further to argue that affect is as important in teaching as books or paper, because of its ability to "move knowledge" (Niccolini, 2016:230), by generating flows of intensities like excitement or anxiety, thereby becoming a form of pedagogy, with an agency of its own. However, it is hard to pinpoint in conventional teaching terms, because it is "pre-cognitive, pre-linguistic, and outside 'rational' control" (Niccolini, 2016:233), and felt bodily rather than being heard or seen. Writing about something that is pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic inevitably presents challenges, but Healy and Mulcahy (2020) suggest that it is easier to identify what affect does in teaching and learning, rather than what it is.

Although 'affective' and 'emotional' are often used interchangeably as adjectives, I have, in this thesis, used 'affect' and 'emotions' as nouns with differing meanings. I have taken 'emotions' to mean feelings that are registered

internally, and which can sometimes be perceived by others through, for example, reading body language, but which can also be kept completely hidden. The role of emotions in teaching and learning has in the past been considered, but often downplayed: this is attributed by Recchia et al. (2018), in their study of loving relationships in early years care, to a historical traditional of working to establish teaching as a rational, scientific profession, rather than a part of the much lower status 'mothering' process. The negative emotions associated with facing difficulties in learning is one area that has been explored, for example Burdon's (2005) study of the experiences of young people diagnosed with dyslexia. Strategies suggested in schools to combat the negative impact of reading difficulties tend to locate the problem as an emotional issue within the pupil, which they need to address, for example by developing their resilience skills.

The term 'affect', however, refers additionally to the impact that internal emotions felt by individuals have on others around them (Murris, 2019). This can be positive, for example when other people seem to get caught up in one person's exuberantly expressed joy (Ahmed, 2010), or negative, when one person's bad mood makes all their colleagues feel on edge and stressed. Thinking in terms of "flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007), rather than just emotions, seems to open up spaces to examine more fully what may be happening in social relationships in teaching and learning situations. It also enables the consideration of a wider range of elements in assemblages, as flows of affect can have agency within a teaching and learning assemblage, and play a part in what emerges in that moment. Below I discuss the work of four authors who apply affect theory to aspects of education that seem relevant to my practice, and in this process shine some light of the role of affect in my teaching: Sara Ahmed (2010), Gail Boldt (2013 and 2019), Kimberly Lenters (2019) and Christian Ehret (2018).

3.2.3. Thinking about 'happy objects' with Sara Ahmed

Sara Ahmed (2010) wrote about affect through the lenses of feminist and queer theory, and while she does not work specifically within the field of education, her thinking about the links between objects and affect seemed useful in considering the vibrancy of resources in my practice. She explored happiness as an affect which can often be produced by objects, things that evoke feelings

of pleasure within us, which we then evaluate as being “good” because we look to them to produce more pleasurable feelings in the future. She posited that this evaluation is often expressed in bodily terms, as our bodies turn towards things that generate positive affect within us, and turn away from those that do not. We also tend to want to gather more of these things around us, with the converse of wanting to “lose” things that are associated with negative affect. The belief that an object will bring happiness spreads out to activities associated with the object, and the object becomes “sticky”, as the affect keeps it connected with ideas, values and emotions. She commented that the word “happiness” comes from the Middle English word “hap”, to chance upon, and thus also to be lucky, which suggests that we cannot plan for this to happen, but have to wait for it to emerge. Ahmed (2010) drew upon the work of Brennan (2004) to describe affect as contagious, something that we catch from people around us: she writes that anxiety is often particularly “sticky” in this context, being caught from others, and then picking up everything it encounters. By the same token, positive affect can be contagious too, and groups can come to share joint happiness centring on an object that is “sticky” with happiness, and this helps to strengthen social bonds within the group.

Ahmed’s (2010) ideas chimed with my experience in 1:1 teaching, that there is often one resource or activity that becomes a source of shared enjoyment that is eagerly anticipated in every lesson, but is often very specific to that particular context. Her ideas also illuminated the role these resources often play in building rapport as well as skills.

3.2.4. Thinking about affect and learning with Gail Boldt

Gail Boldt (2013) combined the perspectives from both her career as a Professor of Education with those from her more recent role as a trainee child therapist, to consider how positive flows of affect (Stewart, 2007) can suffuse learning situations, and transform experiences for those involved. There are two pieces of her writing in particular which both, in their different ways, seemed relevant to some of the affective elements of my own practice.

In an article written in 2013 with Kevin Leander, Boldt described the contrast between how Lee, a Japanese American ten year old boy, engaged with reading activities in school and how she observed him intra-act with books at

home. She writes that Lee was classed in school as a struggling reader, who was reluctantly in receipt of reading interventions, and was resistant to taking part in school literacy activities, as he did not feel that he gained anything positive from them. At home, on the other hand, Boldt reported him starting to read independently at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning, and continue to be engaged in reading, or activities centred around his reading, for the next twelve hours, continuing when his friend Hunter arrived after lunch and joined in with him. Leander and Boldt (2013) highlighted how different from schooled literacy practices is the way in which Lee reads at home, most strikingly the intensity of affect between Lee and the Japanese Manga graphic novels, of which he says: "I love this so much" (Leander and Boldt, 2013:27), possibly in part because of their cultural resonances for him. This intensity seems to propel Lee to engage with the Manga texts in a very animated and all-consuming way, with the result that:

> What emerges is the production of desire in which Lee does not aim to produce texts but to use them, to move with and through them, in the production of intensity. (Leander and Boldt, 2013:25)

Manga comics are full of action, and Lee only spent part of the time reading seated in a chair, mixing this with periods spent trying out poses, moves or hand gestures, and then when Hunter arrived, acting out scenes together. Lee also collected toys based on the martial arts in the comics, for example headbands and toy knives, and he had these by his side as he reads, stopping to touch them or re-arrange them at intervals. This means that his reading was a very embodied experience, and Leander and Boldt (2013) interpreted this as his body becoming part of a constantly changing and emerging assemblage with time, place, material objects and the world of manga. They commented that when Lee and Hunter act out scenes together, they seemed to be following rhythms, either internal ones of the pleasure of moving, or external ones from the manga cartoons they watch on television. There was nothing like a script being constructed, it is instead much more a fluid, relational process, in which literacy is really is "unbounded":

> It seems as likely that what he is experiencing is potential— energy, excitement, an assemblage of emerging possibility that is founded in movement, affect, and desire, that in turn produces both more of the same along with the inevitability of something new. This speaks to

> impulse and to longing, to desire produced in the difference between what is and what might be. (Leander and Boldt, 2013:37)

Leander and Boldt (2013) commented on how alive Lee became when engaged in reading in this way, and how absorbed he was, and consider whether Lee might be more engaged with school literacy activities if they were based on Manga texts. They concluded, however, that these activities would have to be designed to meet the curricula requirements, and in the process would lose all the sense of movement, surprise, playfulness and excess which made them so vibrant for Lee.

This article illustrates how multifaceted children's engagement with literacies can be: they may be passionate about one particular form of literacy, even when they seem to actively dislike the schooled variety, and they may be engaged in many literacy activities at home that remain invisible to their teachers in school. It also highlights the importance of finding reading material that a child really enjoys if they are going to persevere at mastering the technical skills because it gives them a compelling reason to do so. It also struck me that this very active and imaginative approach to stories is one that we recognise and encourage in Early Years settings, but perhaps we expect children to "grow out of" this approach to literacies too quickly after that, when we should instead be delaying a completely paper or screen based, approach until they are older. Lee also had a very multimedia approach to his reading: he read the comic books, watched the stories on the television, collected the artefacts and researched online. He did not seem to see these as different activities, but as different facets of the same one, each enriching the others, which is perhaps not always recognised in school curricula.

Boldt (2019) also wrote about affective flows using perspectives gained not only from her long experience as an educator, but also from her more recent experience as someone new to child psychotherapy, which has given her new theoretical insights, and additionally prompted her to reflect very deeply on her own responses to children. One child who seems to have played an important role in this process is "Bo", a deeply traumatised little boy, who Boldt struggled to connect with over many weeks of therapy. However, once she gave up trying to understand intellectually, and began to just shovel sand in rhythm with him, a connection formed between them, and Bo began to talk to her. To understand

this more fully, Boldt (2019) drew upon the Japanese approach to early years teaching, discussed in a study of the views of Japanese teachers on relationships and teaching by Hayashi and Tobin (2015), in which empathy is the trait in children that teachers most want to encourage, and which they feel is developed through experiencing differences and difficulties with others. Hayashi and Tobin (2015) wrote that the knowledge of how to enact empathy is seen as being very much tacit and embodied, which therefore locates empathy as grounded in affect. In order to develop these skills in children, Japanese teachers aim for “empty-mindedness”, or the freedom from internal chatter, so that they can be very present with the children, and able to build upon what arises in the moment. This reminded Boldt of her early experiences of becoming a teacher, in which her mind was so full of what she needed to say or do next that it was hard to focus fully on what the children in her class really needed. Boldt (2019) concluded that the shared rhythm of a joint activity, which enabled them to be simultaneously both connected to each other but free to experience their own thoughts and feelings, opened up a pathway for positive affective intensities to flow between them, and in turn opened up a space for growth. Boldt (2020) also drew upon the work of Harris (2009) who wrote that both fittedness, where adults and children are comfortable together, but also difference too are needed together, in order to create the movement that enables change, although keeping these two elements together in a creative tension is not easy. This echoed findings from Hayashi and Tobin’s (2015) study above.

Boldt (2019) used the term “haecceity” to describe the points of uniqueness and potential that are waiting to be activated by contact with something else, but only if there is time and space for this to happen. This concept seems very relevant to my study, as 1:1 support can be one of the very few times in a busy school life when adults have time to attend to the flow of affect and energy between themselves and the child they support, as Boldt advised, and can be completely immersed in the present moment. She pinpointed its often underrated value:

> It can sometimes seem so rare now, so hard to hold on to a space for rhythm and movement, watchfulness and thoughtfulness, and the excitement of potential and emergence, in an era in which everything

revolves around intervention and the qualification of rapid results. (Boldt, 2019:38)

3.2.5. Thinking about differenciation with Kimberley Lenters

Lenters (2019) considers the concepts of ‘differentiation’ and ‘differenciation’. In conventional teaching jargon, ‘differentiation’ is often task-based, providing (usually three) different levels of challenge within an activity, generally along the lines of one main task for the large part of the class, with extension activities to both stretch and keep busy the pupils who finish the work quickly and easily, and then a modified version for the children identified by the teacher as not working at the levels of attainment required to manage the main task independently. Deleuze’s (1987) concept of ‘differenciation’ in learning, on the other hand, is the process in which we become something other when we intra-act with the other bodies in a learning assemblage.

Kimberley Lenters (2019) described Charlene, a girl whose attention difficulties limit her ability to produce the multimodal literacy pieces about local history in Canada that her teachers are expecting from the rest of her peers. Charlene’s passion for animals led her to contribute to the group tasks in ways that other members of the group positioned as lacking: an advert for puppies for a newspaper task, and a fragment of story for a project on the oil boom. Lenters (2019), on the other hand, looked at Charlene’s contributions from a completely fresh perspective: she wrote that her enchantment with puppy videos in particular, and animals in general, had such a strong affective force for her that it propelled her to become engaged with the class project despite her attention difficulties, but in different ways to the intended aims of the class teachers. She commented that Charlene’s dramatic reconstruction and commentary about how jackpumps operate in oil production was nearly overlooked because it was not what was being looked for as an end-product, and Charlene’s story fragment was her attempt to write about the danger that animals were placed in by the industrialisation accompanying the oil boom, taking a much more ethical look at the topic than those pupils who uncritically followed the teachers’ expectations. Lenters (2019) added that for Charlene, being in an “end-product driven” (Lenters 2019:53) situation is likely to be very alienating, as the difference in final outcomes is often clearly visible as “less” than that of their peers.

Lenters's (2019) discussion of Charlene's experience is important for my study because it raises two points. One is to illustrate how enchantment and affect can be harnessed to encourage children who might have a lot of negative emotions attached to school literacy activities to become more involved, when teachers, like Charlene's, are happy for them to follow their interests in this way. The second is to ask the question of whether 'differentiation' might be better replaced by 'differenciation'? Trusting children who are struggling with schooled literacy (Street, 1993) in its prescribed form, to try what they know they themselves can manage, and channel what interests and inspires them personally, might encourage them to spend more time involved in literacy activities, and thus have more chance to learn the skills they need to close the gap between themselves and their peers.

3.2.6. Thinking with Christian Ehret about affective moments

Christian Ehret explores education from both a posthumanist and anthropological perspective, looking at places where education happens beyond school buildings, and at the role of affect and identity in learning. In his 2018 article, Ehret (2018) wrote about a very different educational setting from my own, when he was tutoring a thirteen year old boy, who was in hospital receiving treatment for leukaemia. This was a very emotionally intense situation, as Cole himself had been near to death at one point, and wore a bracelet given to him by a fellow patient, Kayla, who did very sadly die. In the midst of this sadness, Cole and his family also experienced their togetherness, and coped with the rigors of chemotherapy, by telling humorous stories about their lives at home in the great outdoors around the Appalachians in America, and joking with Ehret. Ehret (2018) felt the smallness of his teacherly aim of developing Cole's grasp of narrative structure against the immenseness of what Cole and his family are going through, and realised the inadequacy of trying to *think about* what someone else is feeling, replacing this with attempting to *feel with* Cole, in shared moments of affective intensity.

The relevance of this article to my study lies in Ehret's (2018) argument for nonrepresentational approaches to educational research, for the terms "I feel…" or "I sense…" to be as valid as "I think…" or "I argue that…", on the grounds that knowing cannot be separated from being, and that the data collected in educational research can as easily be affective moments that are registered in

the body, as it can be analytical thinking. He drew on Kathleen Stewart's writing on affect, and particularly "something that feels like *some*thing" (Stewart, 2007:2), focusing on such moments in the time he spent with Cole; moments of intensity, whether of connection, or of tension and friction, which he describes as different textures of intensities. He used the term "attunement" to convey how these textures are perceived, suggesting that they are all around us in the same way that radio signals are, but we need to tune in to them pick up what they are saying to us. Ehret (2018) also used the term "temporal textures" to describe moments of affective intensity in which the present moment is layered with significant events from the past, for example when Cole and his family are retelling the story of being chased by the mother bear, and are, in the process, chasing away some of the fears of their current situation, or with the future, when Cole is talking about the bracelet Kayla gave him, as a way to keep memories of her strong.

Ehret (2018) also explored what he termed "desiring-writing", which has some similarities with Kuby et al.'s (2016) concept of literacy desirings (which I discuss further in Section 3.4.2.), when written text is produced to communicate about something that is very meaningful to the writer, for an audience they feel connected to. He illustrated this with Cole's writing which he composed to be read to his aunt, who is also being treated in the same hospital, because he wanted to take his voice to his aunt's bedside, to move closer to her and to support her. Cole was considered to be a reluctant writer when faced with schooled writing tasks, but seemed to be deeply involved with this writing, and Ehret (2018) suggests that there is often an ethical tension between the demands of the school writing curriculum, and writing that springs from an individual pupil's own volition to create a piece of text that meaningful to them. Ehret (2018) seems to struggle with this tension himself, at times, acknowledging his own desires to be viewed favourably by the other teachers working with Cole, by keeping to the more schooled approaches to literacy rather than following the flows of affect, and this really resonated with my own experiences when trying more personalised approaches. He adds that material things can become significant because they are "sticky with desiring" (Ehret, 2018:64), in that they come to be external signifiers of internal desires, and this

seems to explain how matter does sometimes acquire vibrancy (Bennett, 2010) for an individual.

Ehret (2018) wrote that this approach is particularly pertinent for researching disenfranchised communities, as it does not stem from the perspective of seeing them as in need of being “fixed”, but sees them instead as acquiring wisdom as their life experiences accumulate, and this would seem appropriate for my work with children who are really struggling to master learning to read. He wrote that bonds are forged when witness is borne to someone’s pain, or to recognition of what they have the potential to become. Both of these resonate with experiences in my practice of support teaching, as I have found it is always important to acknowledge when someone is going through a tough time, even while trying to convince them that it is possible to overcome their difficulties.

3.3. Jane Bennett: new materialism and enchantment

3.3.1. Thinking with Jane Bennett about enchantment

The next step on my reading journey was discovering the writing of Jane Bennett, a political theorist and philosopher, and Professor of Political Sciences at Johns Hopkins University. I began by reading “The Enchantment of Modern Life” (2001), which takes a philosophical and ethical look at what she sees as the damaging prevalence of feelings of disenchantment with modern life, and the accompanying sense of meaninglessness and alienation. Bennett (2001) lays the blame for this at the door of rationalism, which reduces everything to a calculable and scientific basis, and in the process, she argues, steals the magic and joy from life. The antidote to this, Bennett wrote, lies in enchantment: she described being enchanted as being “struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives among the familiar and everyday” (Bennett, 2001:4). This sense of being struck by something has similarities with Kathleen Stewart’s (2007) writing on affect, which I discussed in the previous section, in which there is a moment when an almost physical force seems to be exerted on the body in response to an encounter with other people or significant objects. Enchantment is, however, a wholly positive feeling, encompassing emotions such as exhilaration, wonder, childlike excitement, and heightened sensibilities. Bennett (2001) is happy to claim the status of “weak ontology” for her thinking: rather than viewing its speculative and personal nature as a failing, according to

traditional theories, she believes that it is instead its strength, reflecting the realities of human nature and the entangled world (Bennett, 2001:161).

My introduction to the link between reading and enchantment came through Burnett and Merchant's (2018a) article on this subject, which prompted me to think more about how the positive emotions generated by reading are traditionally written about: I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter. There are generally only two main concepts, both of which have become so clichéd that they have lost much of their impact: "reading for pleasure" and "a love of reading". The idea of being "enchanted" by a text, on the other hand, seems more apt: Bennett (2001) points out that it is derived from the same roots as the term "spellbound", and being immersed in a story can often feel like being magically transported into a different world. Most importantly for my study, the idea of either being enchanted by a literacy activity, or alternatively being disenchanted by the whole process of getting to grips with literacy skills (especially at a time when the measureable outcomes often seemed to be valued more than any other aspect) seemed to offer a more appropriate vocabulary to describe emotions linked to reading.

3.3.2. Thinking with Jane Bennett about vibrant matter

In her preface to her later book, "Vibrant Matter" (2010), Bennett wrote that she saw enchantment as an affective force, but was now extending her thinking about affect to include non-human entities as well. She now saw enchantment not only as an affective influence on human bodies, but also as often originating in the material things that can produce these forces. Bennett (2010) gave food as an example of matter which we tend to see as passive, something here waiting for us to choose to consume it, whereas it does, in fact, exert a surprisingly varied amount of power over us: it can affect our health, our happiness by influencing our brain chemicals, our size, and even our social standing as others interpret our values and social status from our choices. She argues that the consequences of our choices are not as much in our control as we like to think, illustrating this with the example of the sometimes unpredictable consequences of riding a bike on a gravel road (Bennett, 2010:38), because we are usually acting as part of an assemblage with other matter and often other people too, and that agency is distributed across all the actants in these assemblages (the concept of assemblages is discussed in more detail in

section 4 of this chapter). However, the separate elements within the assemblages are not acting together as a team, but each is behaving according to its nature, but coming together in something that is emergent and fleeting, and often quite unpredictable, resulting in “a sense of a melting of cause and effect” (Bennett, 2010:33).

Bennett’s (2010) thinking about the potential vitality of matter seems to offer fresh insights into my teaching practice, as I had previously only considered material resources in school in the traditional way as passive objects that need to be managed: to be organised, provided to achieve specific teaching goals or given or withheld to boost behaviour expectations. By viewing them as potentially vibrant, it becomes easier to explore their role within teaching and learning, and shed light on how finding the right resource at the right time can really trigger joyful, fruitful learning experiences. Bennett (2010) commented that children tend to experience the vibrancy of materials more naturally than adults have become used to doing, meaning that they may view resources in a different way to the adults working alongside them.

The concept of the vibrancy of resources having agency within a teaching and learning context also provides a way explore how different combinations worked better for individual pupils. In the following section I discuss some authors whose work shines more light on this topic. First is Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher’s (2017) consideration of how the materiality of resources is more impactful than is often recognised, followed by Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave’s (2017) thoughts on the agency of a structured reading scheme in their children’s classroom, and possibly in other classrooms too. I finish this section by discussing Nathan Snaza’s (2019) writing about the agency that literacies can have both in school and in the wider world.

3.3.3. Thinking with Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher about encounters with materials

Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) are inspired by the educational ideas of the Reggio Emilia movement in Italy, in which art activities are seen as crucial learning experiences. In their book, they look very closely at the various ways in which several different materials intra-act with humans in the course of art activities with young children. They were very fortunate to be able to situate

their study within educational settings that have access to not only indoor spaces in which children can engage in much more interactive ways with materials than adult concerns about spoilt clothing and clearing up time afterwards often allow, but also outdoor spaces that include much more of the natural world than is usually afforded by a standard school playground. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) wrote that we often use very limited discourses about materials which then constrain how we use them. They give the example of clay, which is usually perceived as being "for" making pots or sculptures, but they ask how we would approach working with clay differently if we thought about it in terms of place, impermanence, relationality or movement? Broadening out these discourses enabled them to develop new approaches to learning, which were conceptualised in terms of "noticing", the "potentialities of time" and "paper and movement":

A pedagogy of noticing: Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) described their approach as a pedagogy of noticing: they were not so concerned about understanding what was going on, as noticing:

> … the fluxes, movements, and rhythms of the materials, the indefinite and unpredictable encounters, and the generative forces and relations among, with, and between children and materials. (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2017:82).

They conclude their book by writing that this whole process had helped them learn to see differently. By focusing on materials with fresh eyes, they have noticed how they behaved in ways outside those that they are conventionally seen as being "for", and then to seeing how the children responded creatively and innovatively when these different ways of being with materials were developed rather than being reined back to their 'proper' uses. These experiences seem to have been very emotionally charged for the authors as well as the children they were observing: they write that they experienced surprise and delight as well as frustration and puzzlement, and they found that their appreciation of the vibrancy of material was much increased.

Perspectives on the potentialities of time: Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) wrote about how the delivery of a new set of wooden blocks to an early childhood centre they were working with prompted them to ponder on the nature of time and space in early years' education. The blocks seemed different to

other materials, because they seemed to carry the weight of time with them: they had long histories both as pieces of wood that had grown slowly as a tree before being manufactured, and as part of the long tradition of wooden blocks as educational resources. The structures the children made with the bricks also lasted longer than other activities, and had unspoken rules attached to them about who could decide how long they lasted for, as their study had the luxury of a room which did not need to be tidied regularly. This led them to think about the layered qualities of time, and one perspective that seemed to resonate with them was that of the Australian artist John Wolseley (2016). They wrote that he saw places as containing within them deep time, or their long geological development; shallow time, which they link to clock time; and now time, which is the intensity of experiencing that particular place at that particular moment. This then led Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) to link these ideas to their practice, especially about duration, and how memories and the re-experiencing of past intensities are always part of the present, how much "clock time" dominates educational settings, and also about the intensities of how children experience time in their play. They illustrate this with a quote from a child who asked after a one-minute warning for tidying up time: "Is this a big minute or a small minute?" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017:80).

Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) were influenced by Barad's (2007) thinking, particularly her views space and time as being discursively produced, as well as matter (Barad's thinking is explored more fully in Section 5 of this chapter). They quote Barad's description of the nature of time:

> Time is not a succession of evenly spaced intervals available as a referent to all bodies and space is not a collection of pre-existing points set out as a container for matter to inhabit. (Barad, 2007:234).

This is in great contrast to the often political aspects of clock time in schools, when the day is strictly regulated by non-negotiable time slots for different activities, and this is often a cause for stress for both teachers and children, as these slots have prescribed tasks that need to be completed within them, and teachers often struggle to feel that they have enough time for all the children in their class. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) comment that historically being a 'good timekeeper' has had moral values attached to it, as well as practical advantages in an industrialised world. However, they look instead at the agency

of time, for example they notice that once the five minute warning for the end of a session has been given, the children's play seems to speed up and become more energetic and creative. They note that this is often true of other transition times in the day, which they prefer to call transition spaces, because of the sense of newness and potential that changes bring.

Time seems to be very important in my study. It can be viewed in some ways as the main problem for my struggling readers, as they are usually in the process of acquiring the skills to learn to read, but they have not reached the target of a certain level of proficiency at a set time. However, one of the biggest advantages of 1:1 support is that it has flexibility in the use of time, and the potential to find that extra bit of time to learn the skills in, but that brings with it the question of how best to use this time, in a context in which time is seen as a scarcity commodity.

Paper and movement: Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) wrote about using paper in a very different way from how I use it in my study, as they used a lot of discarded newspaper in art activities. However, they comment that paper is more than flat surfaces inscribed with communications, as it also has the propensity to move, either being blown about by draughts or breezes, or curling and warping when it comes into contact with water or sunlight. This made me realise how movement was a key element in how I used sheets of A4 white or coloured paper in my lessons: not only did they get folded or cut up to become little books or reading games, but these were then small enough to be slipped into reading books or bags, and travelled from school to home. Because they were disposable, they did not need to be kept carefully at home before sending back to school, but could be used (or not) at home in any way a pupil wished. A fresh, flat sheet of paper seemed to offer an invitation to be folded and to become something special to that child in that moment, with no expectations of permanence.

3.3.4. Thinking about the agency of levelled reading schemes with Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave

Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave (2017) found themselves simultaneously writing together to explore ways to apply posthumanism to early literacy, and also experiencing the consequences of the current practices for teaching

reading in Early Years settings on themselves as parents. They describe the relationships their own children have with books outside of the levelled reading scheme, for example how one author's daughter loves words, and how they use books together to find out more and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. The other author depicts her son's use of books to fire his imagination and his curiosity, acting out stories in them so he can feel what it is like to be involved within the stories. They contrasted this with their interactions with books in the reading scheme, which seem to be characterised more by frustrations at not knowing words that they felt they should, in a tussle between themselves and the texts.

Their criticism of the levelled texts was, however, only partly centred on the tendency for the process of producing the graduated levels of text difficulty and sentence length to result in stilted and dull texts. For Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave (2017), the most troubling aspect of the school reading scheme was that the children not only saw themselves in terms of the letter of the basket they are currently choosing books from ("I am a K"), but could also name the letter that all the other children in the class 'were', and they are very concerned about "every little piece of this assemblage that makes my son a letter" (Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave, 2017:298). Throughout the article, they repeat the refrain: "the levelled reading books are killing me", and comment that "it does feel like non-human materials are definitely doing something here" (Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave, 2017:298), drawing attention to what they feel is the very strong agency of the structured reading scheme in the classroom.

In my experience both as a practitioner and a parent, this phenomenon can also extend beyond reading schemes, for example a friend's daughter was really upset when she moved schools aged ten, and her teacher commented that she was really sad to be losing "one of her Level 5s", referring to her expected high performance level in the end of year government attainment tests, without mentioning anything else about missing her as a member of class. The authors did not make any suggestions about ways to minimise the influence of the levelled books' "letters" in their children's lives, but I wonder whether the root of the problem lies not so much in the use of a structured reading scheme, but the pressure on teachers to constantly demonstrate pupil progress.

3.3.5. Thinking about animate literacies with Nathan Snaza

Nathan Snaza's book "Animate Literacies" (2019) contains several very interesting ideas about the agency of different kinds of literacies. One of these is his perspective on the materiality of literacy, which he argues has been overlooked in what he describes as the "anthropological understanding" of literacies (Snaza, 2019:88), looking mostly at the human activities involved. He points out that the development of historical early writing technologies shaped the development of early literacies, for example cuneiform writing seems to have been performed by a cut reed being applied to clay tablets, and the shapes used in the characters reflect the possibilities allowed by these two materials (Snaza, 2019:61). He wrote that materiality continues to be of importance in the present: while many authors prompt us to consider all the new forms of literacies, Snaza (2019) reminds us of the pleasure to be had from the materiality of paper books. For him, this was having a library of books that indicated the becomingness of his membership of a class that he had long aspired to, but I was prompted to think, too, about the pleasures for children, for example leafing through a richly illustrated story book.

Snaza (2019) also wrote about what he called the "literacy situation": all that is beyond, beneath and beside a literacy event (Snaza 2019:99). In many of the examples he gives, literacies have a far-reaching agency, which leads Snaza (2019) to describe them as "animate". He wrote that literacies can have political outcomes, one example being the slave owners who tried to keep slaves illiterate to cement them in their enslavement. Another example is the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century which he argues prompted empathy for others, thus contributing to dissolving some of the barriers between people of different social classes. Working to ensure that all children have equal access to literacy skills remains a political matter, which is still a significant issue of social justice.

Snaza (2019) also reminds us of our own materiality in the process of reading. Although we tend to be most aware of the cognitive aspects, he wrote that many other systems apart from conscious thought are involved, for example hormones and sensory perceptions, adding that we think with our bodies first, and then our brains. Reading in turn can affect our bodies, particularly our brains: he quotes Maryanne Wolf (2007): "when reading takes place … the

individual brain is forever changed, both physiologically and intellectually" (Wolf, 2007:5). In my dyslexia training, this was referred to as the plasticity of the brain, as new learning forges new connections between neurons in the brain, but Snaza (2019) points out that it can also be viewed as the brain being emergent, always changing as it intra-acts with physical or cognitive stimuli. Literacy encounters can also "reconfigure" the body's affects (Snaza, 2019:149), whether positively or negatively, depending on our emotional responses to them. This description of the brain as being constantly emergent is very important to my study, because children are often labelled as a certain sort of learner, and these labels can stick for a long time, whereas they might be just learners who need a little more support in learning one particular thing at one particular time, and learning this one thing may lead to them being able to learn other, different things.

In addition, Snaza (2019) also draws attention to the need to consider the role of the "affective accumulations" (Snaza 2019:139) that children bring with them into classrooms, and those that teachers generate, in the potentiality of learning situations. He cites Jane Tompkins' (1990) article entitled "Pedagogy of the distressed" in which she wrote that the emphasis on performance in schools, both for pupils and teachers, brings with it constant levels of the fear of failing to live up to expectations. Snaza (2019) characterised the consequent feelings of being unsafe as bewilderment, and contrasted this with the opposite of "a particular intensity of affective attunement that I would like to call *love*" (Snaza, 2019:140). He emphasised that this sort of love is not empty romanticism or banal statements, but about complete openness towards, and acceptance of, the people we are with and the situation we find ourselves in. This seems a very helpful way to talk about the warm relationships that can be built in 1:1 teaching situations, which are an important aspect of my study.

3.4. Deleuze and Guattari: assemblages, rhizomes and becomings

3.4.1. Thinking about complexity with Deleuze and Guattari

The work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is entangled in much of the literature I have read for my study, including that by Jane Bennett (2001, 2010) (see Sections 3.3.1&2 above), Lenz Taguchi (2009) (see 3.5.2. below) and Kuby et al (2016) (discussed further in 3.4.2. below). While many of their concepts are

quite complex, there are some that seem particularly useful in constructing a new way to look at literacy learning: rhizomes, lines of flight, smooth and striated spaces, assemblages of desire and becomings.

Rhizomes: Deleuze and Guattari (1987) critiqued Western thinking in the 1980s for taking only one fixed view point: being rigid, binary, linear and hierarchical, organised into categories and subcategories branching off in a tree-like structure: they described this as “arborescent” thought. Instead, they viewed thought as more often being like a rhizome, an underground root system that operates on a horizontal plain, and grows in many, often unexpected, directions at once. They wrote that rhizomes can be mapped, in terms of a diagram of possible directions and possible new connections, rather than traced, in terms of being captured in one definitive image of what it ‘is’.

Honan (2007) explored using rhizomatic thinking as a methodology, and described it as resembling a trail that connects to other trails, goes around obstacles or even disappears for a while, as opposed to trudging in straight lines down city pavements. It may go underground, like plant bulbs or tubers, or interconnecting animal burrows, or up into the sky like birds in flight (Honan, 2007:535-6). I had struggled to find suitable vocabulary in conventional educational thinking to describe how I improvised resources and approaches to meet individual pupils’ needs in my 1:1 lessons: my experiences of ideas ‘just popping into my head’ seem quite lame in the former way of thinking, but make more sense in Deleuzean concepts of rhizomatic development. Kuby et al. (2016) examined rhizomatic teaching in depth, and I will discuss this in more detail further on in this section.

Lines of flight: A key characteristic of rhizomes is their propensity to be frequently broken, or ruptured, and then to regrow in unexpected places or directions, and this generated Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of “lines of flight”, when thinking can suddenly take off in new directions. They described this process as deterritorialization, when new ideas or possible ways of being are created. If these are then taken up and become established, this process is described as reterritorialization.

Smooth and striated spaces: Dividing thought processes into either rhizomatic or linear leads to the delineation of spaces as either smooth or striated: they

illustrate these different styles with the examples of cities as “striated” places, in which the placement of roads and houses ensure that travel only happens along set directions and pathways, whereas “smooth” deserts can be travelled across in potentially endlessly possible ways. I was particularly drawn to their illustration of knitting as being striated, and embroidery as smooth (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:474).

Lenz Taguchi (2009) applied these concepts to educational settings, and commented that neither space is essentially superior to the other, as striated spaces give structure to our days and guidelines on how to behave socially without having to continually renegotiate each situation, while smooth ones open spaces for creativity and innovation, so a balance between the two would seem the ideal. The school literacy curriculum, and my structured multisensory teaching programme seemed to fit into traditional, “arborescent” educational thinking, as well as the striated spaces of schooled learning. Lenz Taguchi (2009) argues for more smooth spaces in contemporary education settings, in which educators can listen to what is happening with children’s learning as it unfolds, and respond to extend or challenge, rather than being completely dominated by the need to deliver content.

Assemblages, desirings and becomings: Assemblages, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), contain within them a range of “multiplicities”, including elements that they suggest can be “human, social or, technical”, all on one “plane of consistency”, without any sort of hierarchical structure. They wrote that assemblages have both “content and expression”, but this is constantly evolving and changing, so it is not possible to define exactly what one particular assemblage “is”. However, it is possible to say what it produces, and what it connects to: like a rhizome, it can be mapped, but not definitively traced. At the heart of an assemblage, they write, is desire: the urge to create or experience something new, which can result in becomings, in which two or more different elements come together to form something that is often unexpected. Linked to this are intensities, particularly intensities of emotions or flows of affect, which are often more important in assemblages than more purely cognitive thought.

These ideas seem to be very helpful in looking at literacies, especially as Deleuze and Guattari write specifically that: “Literature is an assemblage.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:4). Kuby et al. (2016) identify assemblages of

desiring as being a particularly helpful concept for writing about literacy learning, as it includes not only intra-actions between humans, and cognitive literacy activities, but also the resources used, the emotions of the participants, the desires of the children to learn and make, and also the mapping of the sometimes unexpected results that can emerge in the smooth spaces within assemblages. These ideas resonated with my teaching experiences: even when children seemed disenchanted with school literacy, I could usually discover some forms of literacy desirings within them that I could encourage and facilitate.

These ideas are also very helpful for exploring the broader possibilities of children's identities as either readers or learners in general. If individuals are always part of constantly evolving assemblages, then they themselves are, as a result, always also evolving, or becoming different. This argues against fixed identities, replacing them with "fluid, rhizomatic identities and ways of being, doing and learning" (Kuby et al., 2016:47). The concept of identities being fluid suggests that entering into a positive literacy desiring assemblage could, alongside with 'becomings' in literacy skills, also open spaces up for more self-confidence in other areas too. Lenz Taguchi (2009) wrote that this Deleuzian ontology of immanence means that we do not so much "have" an identity, but "do" various aspects that form parts of our identities, for example gender or class, in an ongoing process that happens in social settings in which we have only partial control, and also in this process affect how other people "do" their identities. When applied to learning situations, this thinking suggests that we do not have just one stable identity as a learner, but that identities or subjectivities are reconstructed every time we learn a new skill or acquire new knowledge. Lenz Taguchi (2010) believes that:

> This is, unfortunately, a hugely overlooked consequence of education in education research, which is still predominantly preoccupied with separating the production of knowledge as an individual cognitive process from the production of identity and subjectivity in contexts of teaching and learning. (Lenz Taguchi 2010:121)

This oversight in education research is one that my thesis contributes to remedying.

3.4.2. Thinking with Candace Kuby and colleagues about a rhizomatic approach to literacy teaching

As rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) is rooted in the posthumanist ontology of knowing-being-doing, a child's literacy practices and knowledge could thus be seen as intrinsically part of their whole being as a person (rather than a purely cognitive skill to be compared to arbitrary standards), always in a process of growth and exploration as the child intra-acts with the world around, including other children as well as adults, and the more-than-human in the form of materials, time and space. Kuby et al (2015) wrote that this thinking suggests that planning for literacy activities should be centred on what might happen: the sort of writer the child might become, the new understandings the child might develop, and the way in which activities might diverge from the plan. This way of teaching leaves time and space to answer in depth questions that children ask, to make the most of unexpected opportunities, to allow children more autonomy, to have a range of possible responses that are not necessarily ranked from 'superior' to 'inferior', to intra-act with materials and to be creative and innovative.

Applying the term "rhizomatic" to literacy learning is relatively new, but this seems to have arisen not from the development of new ways of learning but from the desire to critique "schooled" literacy practices, particularly for trying to "tame" literacy into neat, manageable, measureable components (Kuby et al (2015), in contrast to literacy practices in the world beyond schools. I am conscious as I write this that I am trying to present a public front of a logical, structured, well-argued piece of writing, but my private dishabille writing practices involve the very rhizomatic processes of cutting and pasting multiple times, going back to re-read the literature, realising the direction I am going in is not working and deleting bits (fissures in rhizomatic terms), and even intra-acting with the cat, as he typed by walking over the keyboard, and while I was editing to remove the random letters, I was also making changes within sentences. While many children come to school with some experiences with books that are similar to schooled literacy, for example having a 'bath, book, bed' routine, they also come with experiences of sharing books in ways that could be characterised as being very rhizomatic: a study by Hall et al. (2018) illustrated how book sharing at home with pre-school children was often initiated

and led by children rather than adults at various points in the day, becoming the starting point for discussion or storytelling, and serving functions like providing family bonding time or behaviour management rewards, rather than being seen purely as a tool to develop literacy related skills.

“Writers’ Studio”: A model of how rhizomatic teaching can be used within school is the “Writers’ Studio” approach to literacy taken by Tara Gutshall in her classroom of 7 and 8 year olds (Kuby et al. 2018). Their theme was the solar system, and the children were provided with a large range of resources, both in terms of research materials like books and I.T. access, and also paints, paper and craft supplies, with which to both research the subject and to present their findings to each other, in written, spoken, pictorial or 3D form. The theme was generated by interest the children were expressing, and there were no predetermined expected outcomes. Kuby and Crawford document how the children became parts of what Kuby et al. (2016) term “assemblages of desirings”, with each other, the material resources, the ideas and information they were discovering, and the adults in the room; and then became intensely engaged in learning and then recording their learning to present to an appreciative and intra-active audience of their peers. These assemblages sparked ideas as the children worked collaboratively, or the materials “spoke” to the children and seemed to suggest new ways they could be incorporated into the finished literacy event, in ways that only unfolded gradually as the process evolved. The quality of the learning produced in this way exceeded Gutshall’s expectations, and the desire to communicate seemed to motivate the children to want to extend their own skills, with even the least confident writers in the class improving against the external assessment criteria. Kuby et al (2015) suggest that the newness and unexpectedness of activities generated in this way is more likely to make them enchanting (Bennett, 2001), The children in Writers’ Studio are documented using rhizomatic learning independently and confidently, explaining clearly their thinking processes and negotiating with peers and adults in total absorption in their self-directed projects. This process also illustrates how the children’s ‘literacy desirings’, their own wish to produce a literacy event to communicate with others and to express their own interests and learning, prompt them to produce texts without the need for external rewards or sanctions from adults.

Although this way of teaching could seem superficially less demanding for teachers, only requiring the provision of resources then letting the children 'just get on with it', Kuby et al (2016) show instances of how the class teacher and co-researcher Tara frames and scaffolds the activities to maintain both the quality of the learning experience and the autonomy of the children in a 'sweet spot' of balance between the two, which is really skilful and requires confidence and experience in a teacher. They also document how much courage it takes Tara to step outside of the expected ways of teaching in her school, even with the moral and practical support of her co-researchers, so this model of teaching is likely to remain out of the grasp of most class teachers. Currently, schools in England are very much judged by their ranking in performance tables according to their results in the end of Year 6 tests, and planning is usually very detailed, geared to ensure every single inch of the curriculum to be tested is covered over the year. Kuby and Thiel (2019) warn against our tendency to create literacy "monsters", which can be both wondrous and unintentionally destructive: this sort of long term planning for weeks and even months ahead may be very efficient, but it also gives very little scope for teachers to be responsive to children's interests, questions or emotions. Whatever their feelings or pedagogical beliefs, the majority of teachers in England are obliged to work in this way, which Kuby et al (2015) believe mirrors the conceptualising of children within the school system as immature, lacking individuals who are constantly being measured (and often found wanting) against where an ideal child of their age 'ought' to be. However, my practice, supporting children for whom the standardised methods of teaching literacy skills are not helping, seems an ideal space to try a more emergent, rhizomatic style of teaching to explore what might help them more effectively because it opens up a space to listen to the child, and to follow their individual learning preferences and interests to inform a tailor-made intervention.

3.4.3. Educational contexts as assemblages

Describing the context in which learning takes place is traditionally seen as 'setting the scene', as if it is just the stage set in which the real action takes place. However, the concept of assemblages has been very useful in highlighting the role of material objects, spaces or bodies, combining with the more cognitive elements of my practice, to produce something more than the

sum of the parts involved. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) thinking about assemblages would suggest that what emerges as the learning process unfolds is a product not only of the people involved and the more-than-human elements like resources, as discussed previously, but also other elements that are not often considered in more conventional pedagogy, for example the space where it happens. Classrooms have traditionally been seen as usually roughly cuboid containers in which people (pupils and school staff) and objects (furniture and resources) are "parked" (Leander et al., 2010), but posthumanist thinking sees them as having an enacted agency of their own, as well as being a "nexus" through which flows of learning connect with other places, for example pupils' homes and communities (Leander et al., 2010). As my study mostly took place in a small office which I used as a mini-classroom, two concepts linking emotion and place seemed especially applicable.

3.4.4. Thinking about children's emotional geographies in school with Lisa Procter

Lisa Procter (2015) wrote that conventional thinking about children's spaces is usually influenced strongly by adult discourses of childhood, and focuses on places like playgrounds or skate parks, which are on the margins of the adult world. Procter (2015), however, looked at how children react in different ways to the adult constructs of how spaces in school 'should' be used. A key term for Procter is that of emplacement, which she defined as: "how our relationships in and with spaces and places become patterned over time" (Procter, 2015:129). However, these patterns are not immutable: while they are rooted in past histories, they are "also in flight and directed to multiple possible futures" (Procter, 2015:133) and so are always potentially negotiable. Procter (2015) commented that patterns of relationships within groups and between individuals, and how identities are performed within these, are not static but constantly adjusted, in an interplay between emotions and places. This means that spaces can take on liminal potentialities, a physical space providing an emotional space in which it is possible for new relationships and new identities to be formed.

Procter (2015) also explored how children navigate the "feelings rules" that adults in school expect them to follow. She wrote that there is a long history in schools about what sort of emotional responses are seen as positive or

negative, and although these are socially constructed, I think, from a practitioner's point of view, that there is also an element of practicality involved, having myself experienced how one child expressing intense anger, physically and verbally, in a classroom densely populated by twenty nine other children and two adults can be quite traumatic for everyone involved. Different spaces in schools have different adult-led "feelings rules" attached to them, for example it is more acceptable to be exuberant in the playground, in contrast to filing into the school hall in silence for assembly, whereas the head teacher's office could be associated both with being in disgrace or celebrating achievements. Procter (2015) added that the physicality of how the associated emotions are embodied tends to be much more marked for children than it is for adults. Adults also use space in schools to influence social groupings in schools, assigning children to particular spaces within school as they assign them to year groups, classes, or special provision for those with additional needs. However, children do not always adhere to the "feelings rules" as closely as adults hope, and Procter (2015) showed how one pupil, Justin, puts his own emotional stamp on his use of school spaces. She described how he takes the opportunity of being given the more 'grown up' task of washing dishes on a school residential trip as an opportunity to discuss his enjoyment of violent films aimed at a much older audience, which would not be acceptable in a classroom discussion.

The concept of emotional geographies in school is relevant to my study in two ways. It illuminates questions about what sort of emotions is it acceptable to express in different places in school about finding literacy-based activities particularly hard, and what happens to such emotions if there is no acceptable space to express them? It also helps to explore questions about how literacy support is affected by the physical space within school in which it takes place, and how this varies from pupil to pupil.

3.4.5. Thinking about third spaces with Levy

Rachael Levy (2008), in her study exploring home literacy practices and those of the early years setting she was working with, wrote about "third spaces" in literacy learning as spaces in between two different approaches. Levy (2008) argues that third spaces can be literal as well as figurative, for example the community literacy classrooms described by Pahl and Kelly (2005), or prisoners' literacy teaching provision. Levy (2008) describes how individual

pupils constructed their own “third spaces” by finding common grounds between what they perceive as the expectations of school, and their home experiences of literacies, including what they watched on television, games they accessed on home IT equipment, stories they were read and toys and games they liked to play with. She comments that some children seem to have found a more comfortable space that happily bridges both worlds, which helps them to make a smoother transition to the more formal teaching of reading skills when they go into the next school year, whereas others seem to have less helpful bridging between the two. Even though the children are still very young, they have often found their own strategies that surprised the adults around them, indicating that they were self-generated rather than being adult-led. Levy (2008) concludes that schools have been very slow to adapt their provision to the changing literacy practices at home, and in the wider world, sticking to mainly paper-based, traditional literacy activities, and not making the most of the multi-modal opportunities that are widely available, and thus making schooled practices less accessible to some sections of the community than to others.

Levy (2008) used pupil participation in her study, asking the children about what they do and think, and in the process found that they had knowledge and skills that their teachers and parents were not aware of. This emphasis on trying to shine a light on the reality of how children see and do school literacy, rather than just adult perceptions, is facilitated by having a space that is in school, but a bit apart from the expectations of classroom norms. This concept sheds light on the importance for my study of being able to use a small office within school for the majority of my lessons, away from the normal classroom.

3.4.6. The role of human bodies as well as brains in literacy learning assemblages

As I had been immersed in conventional pedagogy for most of my career, I had only vaguely recognised the role played by our physical bodies as well as our brains in literacy teaching and learning. The authors below all have different insights into this.

Thinking with Stephanie Jones about embodied literacies

Stephanie Jones (2016) is a teacher educator who decided that she could best teach her trainee teacher students about the experiences of children in group

reading sessions by unexpectedly putting them in the same position. She described how she switched to the very calm and authoritative demeanour of the teacher scanning the group and choosing the next reader, while her students reported feeling sweaty, shaky and conscious of their hearts racing faster while they waited for their name to be called out to read next. Jones (2016) believes that is not possible to conduct this “round robin” reading practice without positioning students as powerless and vulnerable in this way. When she asked the students about the content of the text, they were very vague because their focus had been more on reading individual words, particularly tricky ones, correctly, and trying to ‘read’ the social aspects of the situation: who was a more or less confident reader, or why were students picked when other were not? Normally these trainee teachers would consider themselves as good readers, but Jones (2016) described how this material-discursive practice led many of them to feel a sense of failure and to behave in a way much more associated with struggling readers, feeling fear and stumbling over words. Children can often react in the same way too, with the consequence that the gap between more and less confident readers is likely to widen when reading activities are conducted in this way (Jones, 2016).

Jones (2016) argued that this response illustrates that reading is, in her words, “full-bodied” (Jones, 2016:87): reading is carried out by a physical body interacting with a material text, in a location which will impact on that process, and with social expectations generated by other people or institutions, all of which will produce physiological responses. She described print reading as: “a full body production of corporeal and affective performance” in response to not only the text but also the social context and power relations around it, which when repeated over time become “memorised through and by [the] body” (Jones, 2016:87). Jones illustrated this concept of embodied memory by her own experience of associating a particular piece of music with receiving some bad news about her brother, and of feeling again the physical panic reactions when she heard the music years later, as well as remembering the event in her head. Jones (2016) concluded with the comment that, although it is completely unintentional, some school practices can inflict emotional, and then as a consequence physically felt, pain, especially on those children who find the tasks particularly difficult. Although Jones (2016) does not suggest any

alternatives to this form of reading activity, her argument does suggest that 1:1 or paired reading activities might be preferable for those most at risk of struggling in a bigger group. It does also suggest a mechanism which explains how children who have had earlier difficulties mastering decoding skills can continue to see themselves as someone who ‘can’t read’, even though it looks to an outside observer as if they have overcome those difficulties.

3.4.7. Thinking with Enriques, Johnson and Kontovourki about disciplined bodies in literacy activities

Enriques, Johnson and Kontovourki (2016) wrote about the extent to which children’s bodies are disciplined in the course of literacy activities in school. They comment that there are ‘correct’ ways to sit, set times for being active or being still, and even the children’s gaze is directed by the teacher. Children are also trained in the ‘correct’ ways to hold pencil, to turn book pages, and there are even set times to meet physical needs like going to the toilet and sanctioned ways of physically expressing emotions. These expectations, they wrote, are disciplined by surveillance and regulation, but not fully adhered to, as some children choose not to conform to expectations. This seems to me to be a very important perspective, especially useful to consider for those children who would really like to be a lot more physically active than a typical school day would allow, and who would probably flourish if more schooled learning was active, with less desk-based activities and more autonomy in tasks. In these more traditional teaching settings, teachers’ bodies too have to be self-disciplined: part of teacher training is learning to use body language, tone of voice and pace to assume the role of ‘teacher’; I became more aware of how I myself used this as my study progressed.

3.4.8. Thinking with Thiel about play as embodied literacies

Jaye Thiel (2015) argues for children’s imaginative play to be classed as a form of embodied literacy, as children come together in assemblages with other children and ideas and artefacts from popular culture, to improvise stories that evolve as they all contribute to them. Thiel (2015) wrote about the superhero play that she became part of at a children’s club, and which she observed as a participant. Because the children loved the characters they were being, she felt that this play was driven very strongly by affect, whose “stickiness” informs:

> … what gets named, remembered, embodied, and performed, serving as a catalyst in the ways we learn to become and move through the world. Visceral experiences leave residual effects that may become embodied performances or embodied literacies, such as family routines or superhero play, or part of a larger societal construct, like the ways we perceive and enact social class, race, and gender. (Thiel, 2015:40).

This meant that their play was suffused with what Thiel (2015) has named "muchness", an all-absorbing feeling of body and mind energised together in the joy of a task or activity, and this gave them an enthusiasm that was not necessarily a feature of their usual schooled literacy experiences. Thiel (2015) points out that this is not a new concept, as object-based and embodied play as part of young children's literacy activities has formed part of Piaget's work from 1962 and Vygotsky's from 1978, but that she has updated it by framing this improvisational play within the context of assemblages.

Thiel (2015) believes that broadening traditional schooled definitions of what literacy is, to include characters and stories from popular culture and to involve children's objects related to them brought from home, is particularly important when working with children from a wide range of backgrounds. She adds that providing opportunities for children to engage in physically acting out stories that are emotionally impactful for them can help to increase the potential for more children to be involved with a form of literacy in which they feel knowledgeable, confident and creative. Thiel (2015) defines literacy in a way that emphasises its role across all aspects of an individual's way of being in the world, which really resonated with my own experiences as a reader as well as a teacher:

> Literacy is not bound up in manuscripts, coiled up in composition notebooks, or encased in markmaking utensils, nor is literacy merely a communication tool. Literacies are leaky, seeping deep into our bodies and unfurling through our movements, perceptions, and reactions to other bodies. (Thiel, 2015:46)

3.5. Karen Barad: quantum physics and philosophy

3.5.1. From beginner readers to quantum physics?

When I began my research, it would have seemed inconceivable that I would be attempting to read about quantum physics in order to understand the problems experienced by children who are struggling to 'sound out' even quite simple

words. However, Karen Barad's(2007) application of her knowledge of quantum physics to philosophy has enabled her to develop new ideas about how we think and understand the world, which she explains in "Meeting the Universe Halfway" (2007). One particular phenomenon was significant: quantum physicists had noticed that one atom can be seen to respond to another that is too far away to have any perceivable chain of cause and effect, and this led Barad to the conclusion that everything is more connected than we have hitherto realised, in a manner that she calls "intra-action". This then led her to question many of the binary divides that had previously been seen as self-evident, for example self and other, nature and culture, living and non-living, visible and invisible (Barad 2007:201), and from there to propose that we cannot separate our knowing from our being, in what she termed an onto-epistemological approach. This concept is pivotal to my methodological approach, and I will discuss it further in the next chapter.

It also led to the concept of "entanglement", in which all the elements in an assemblage affect each other in a constantly developing and changing way. Materials are included in these entanglements, having what Barad (2007) termed "enacted agency": while they do not have the same sort of agency as humans, they do influence the way humans behave and think, in a way that happens "in between". Hultman and Taguchi (2010) illustrate this with the example of a small girl playing in the sandpit, as they discuss how the nature of the sand influences how the child plays with it and moves on it, in a way that is mutually intra-active, a term that Barad (2007) used to distinguish it from the similar word interactive, which involves two or more components with more equally matched levels of overt agency. Another traditional binary divide that Barad challenged was that of language and reality; that the real world exists independently from us, and we observe it and use language to describe it. Barad (2007) believed instead that language and matter are also entangled, that the boundaries we perceive between things, the "agential cuts" that delineate belonging to one category or another, exist only in the way we have come to talk about things (Barad 2007:206). Kuby et al. (2019) comment that agential cuts are the way power is often enacted, because they decide what people, materials, space and time are brought together, and therefore which happenings then become possible, and which do not.

Barad's (2007) concept of entanglement, with its emphasis on intra-actions and connections, suggest that a reader is not just a using their eyes and brains, but bringing to bear their whole being and life experiences to the reading situation. As this approach rejects binaries, for example male/female, body/mind, it opens up spaces to consider how each individual reader approaches literacy activities, including the ways in which they express their own ways of performing gender, class, culture or family belonging. The concept of entanglement has many applications to literacy learning.

Entanglement of home and school literacies: Literacy learning that takes place in school is only one of many literacies that children may also take part in, and these different literacies seem likely to intra-act in many possible ways. Several authors explore some of these intra-actions from a range of perspectives. Hicks (2002) described in great detail how two children from working class backgrounds bring to their literacy learning a huge range of ideas, emotions and ambitions, that all influence how they interact with the literacy activities in their class in school. Hicks (2002) wrote predominantly from the perspective of challenging some of the more negative stereotypes about working class families' attitudes towards school literacies, which she felt were often voiced by largely middleclass teachers, illustrating how these children receive rich learning experiences at home too. She also commented on how they express their understanding of the expectations of their gender in their literacy activities. While the relationship between gender and reading choices is part of library discourses, and even seems to be colour-coded in magazine selections for adults (in my local newsagents, the left-hand section is women's and crafting magazines, all pink, purple and pastels, the more gender-neutral middle section of gardening and walking tends more to primary colours, especially bright blue skies, and the right-hand side has metallic grey and camouflage gadget magazines), often the desire to avoid gender stereotyping in literacy activities leaves this unacknowledged in schools.

In their book about local literacies, Barton and Hamilton (2012) explored in detail some of the myriad ways in which literacy is interwoven with everyday life. They drew on Brandt's (2002) book describing how literacy skills have developed in American communities over the past century, particularly her concept of literacy sponsors, members of the community who support others to

develop their literacy skills, with either practical, or motivational and emotional, support. Kate Pahl has also explored extensively the different forms that literacies can take in communities, and particularly their materiality, for example her book written with Jennifer Rowsell on artefactual literacies (Pahl and Rowsell, 2012).

3.5.2. Thinking with Lenz Taguchi about an intra-active pedagogy

Barad's (2007) theory of onto-epistemology is a cornerstone for Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, a Swedish Early Years teacher educator, who applied the concepts of intra-activity to pedagogy, particularly in early years' settings, in her book written in 2009. Lenz Taguchi believed that Barad's (2007) concept of the inseparability of being and knowing impacts upon our whole understanding of the foundations of education. Working from this view point suggests that both the learner and the teacher, the content of the activities and the resources used are so entangled that it makes no sense to consider any part as a separate entity. Lenz Taguchi (2010) rejected the traditional hierarchical model of teaching, in which the teacher already knows the content of the lessons, and the pupil has to try and understand, finding themselves thus positioned as "standing beneath" the teacher in terms of competence and importance. Instead, she advocates a listening pedagogy, in which the adults ask the children about their thoughts and explore what they too contribute to learning processes. She questioned whether it is possible to teach meaningfully without doing so.

Challenging the theory/practice divide: Thinking about interconnectedness also led Lenz Taguchi (2010) to contest the traditional divide between theory and practice in education, which she sees as being based on the outdated ideas that "theory" is logical and intellectually superior, while "practice" is more messy, feminine and tacit. Instead, Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggested that theory and practice are in constant intra-action with each other: decisions a practitioner makes are grounded in theory, whether formally taught or developed personally, and thinking about what occurs in practice influences conceptions of theories, confirming or questioning them. Questioning the traditional theory/practice divide enabled Lenz Taguchi (2010) to reframe learning as densely textured situations, in which relationships play an important role. She believes that practice has often in the past been seen as "less" than theory because it has been associated with "feminine" traits such as caring and nurturing, which have

not always been valued as highly as more “masculine” ones of authority and discipline.

Critique of reductive pedagogies: These fresh approaches to educational thinking led Lenz Taguchi (2010) to critique Piagetian models of child development, which she feels take an overly biological view that a child is maturing cognitively and emotionally in a similar way to their physical growth, for the most part in the same way as their peers, and thus their development can be plotted against that of a “normal” child. Lenz Taguchi (2010) argued that if children are only viewed through this one lens, the narrowness of focus will result in so many possibilities for the child to be developing in a much wider range of attributes and competencies going unnoticed. This is illustrated by her example of a pre-school practitioner in Sweden who documented her experiment to see how one-year-olds reacted when given the opportunity to explore objects that floated or sank in glass bowls of water. Although they did not have the language skills to explain what they had learnt, which therefore meant that according to traditional teaching methods they could not be credited with new knowledge, they did seem to acquire insights into which objects could float if put into the water in specific ways, which they then spontaneously transferred to outdoor play in puddles later on. In addition, they used the apparatus carefully and thoughtfully, with not one child engaging in the sort of potentially dangerous behaviours with water and glass bowls that would traditionally be predicted for children of such a young age. Lenz Taguchi (2010) viewed this narrow lens as a part of a current trend in education to try to control, reduce and measure the complexities of children’s learning, even while we are increasing in our understanding of the diversity of strategies and ways of knowing that children use. Instead, she advocates broadening out our focus towards “challenging the *possibilities and potentialities*” (Lenz Taguchi 2010:161) of learners in a process that is less directed to trying to ensure predetermined end results, but which she believes will deliver greater, better quality, learning outcomes.

Pedagogical documentation and the teacher as learner: Lenz Taguchi’s (2010) approach also involves educators being very aware of how their own experiences and emotional responses influence how they not only respond to their pupils but also approach teaching activities. To tap into this, Lenz Taguchi

drew on practices developed in the early childhood education centres in the Reggio Emilia district of Italy, to recommend the use of what she calls “pedagogical documentation”. This is not the conventional half term plans with daily lessons planned in advance, but more continuous pedagogical conversations, with educational aims more loosely held, and scope given for plans to change as the children intra-act with the activities. The process of using pedagogical documentation means that teachers are also learners, not just in the training process, but throughout their careers, as they increase their knowledge and understanding of how children think and learn from their observations and reflective thinking. This prompts the educators to try new activities based on listening to and watching children’s play and thinking, which then enrich their repertoires of resources and activities. This is illustrated with the story of a practitioner who used this process to work with some small boys in a Swedish nursery, who were using sticks in the outdoor play area as guns, in games whose physicality caused problems for themselves and others. Remonstrations failed, but the practitioner mulled over the situation in her writing at home, and decided to take the different approach of asking if the sticks had names. This changed the trajectory of the play, as the boys then gave their sticks names, added back stories of families and homes, and girls joined in too: Lenz Taguchi (2010) points out how teachers can in this way code, de-code and re-code learning situations. Indeed, she considers that it is often questions like this, or problems arising in activities, that generate learning opportunities, and that we must consider the whole dense and textured interconnections that they happen in, including the affective elements.

The concept of teacher as learner also involves being aware of how memories of being a pupil in school themselves influence teachers in their practice. While some are positive and inspirational, others can be negative: Lenz Taguchi (2010) gives as an example some female trainee teachers, who have come to view themselves as “not good at maths”, which then subconsciously leads them to deliver less confident and engaging maths lessons, if not addressed.

Lenz Taguchi’s (2010) writing is very important in several areas of my thesis. Several concepts form the basis of much of my methodology, for example I came to see that I was using my research journal very much as pedagogical documentation, and I will explore these further in Chapter 5. In addition, Lenz

Taguchi's thinking offered a framework in which to think about helping children who find learning harder than many of their peers because it is:

> … a pedagogy that works with and makes use of – rather than working against – differences, diversities and increased complexities of learning and knowing. (Lenz Taguchi 2010:9).

While there is a strong critique of the individual deficit model in literature about children facing additional barriers to learning, less is written about ways to construct a more positive replacement that does not underestimate the unevenness of experiences for some children when they begin to learn to read.

Lenz Taguchi's (2010) emphasis on exploring complexity, as opposed to focusing on content and outcomes is key to my study as well: an intra-active pedagogy offers ways to interrogate how several different factors come together in different ways for each pupil. Including new materialist thinking also helps to explore complexities in learning to read, as it is a key aspect in exploring individualising teaching strategies. Lenz Taguchi's (2010) emphasis on the human contribution to the learning process involves considering both the practitioner as a whole person, including their own early educational experiences, current learning, and emotions; and also considering the developing child as a whole person, rather than a plotted point on a developmental graph. I feel that I have grown, as a support teacher, from working with every child I taught, and Lenz Taguchi explains some of the mechanisms behind this. It was also very refreshing to read about some of the more 'feminine' nurture aspects of teaching being central to the process, rather than as the icing to the more significant 'cake' of teaching content.

3.5.3. "We're a little loud. That's because we like to read!": what entanglements between children as readers, their peers and books can make happen

The agency of entanglements and intra-actions in literacy teaching and learning is illustrated very vividly for me by a study carried out by Moses and Kelly (2018), who documented a project by a class teacher in southwest America to increase reading engagement and motivation among her first grade pupils. At the beginning of the school year, the teacher was concerned that pupils arrived from the preceding kindergarten class with a very skills-based view of reading, that it was mainly about recognising sight words and decoding strategies. This

approach had resulted in many of the children disliking reading and actively avoiding participating in activities involving it: in class individual reading sessions, the teacher had to stop the class after only three minutes because of off task behaviours. She decided to stop doing more technical reading activities like word work, and to increase the amount of choice for the children in choosing their own books from a large class library (they were much more fortunate than most classes in having 500 books to choose from, which might have been a significant factor in the success of the project), providing guidance in the form of input about different authors and genres. She used partner reading activities to scaffold the reading skills of the weaker readers, as the class included children whose skill levels ranged from one year below expected for their age, to a year above. The children had weekly times to choose new books (branded as “book shopping”), and there were timetabled slots to share information about their choices.

By the end of the year, there seemed to be a real enthusiasm for reading throughout the class, as the authors reported that the children were choosing to read over other activities, for example asking to have a book party in preference to alternatives, like a film or ice cream party, as a behaviour treat. The class teacher seemed to be happy to allow the children to follow and develop their own interests, using book borrowing data to inform the acquisition of new titles based on the popularity of existing books, and not expecting all children to tackle all genres or authors, relying instead on the enthusiasm of other children to ‘sell’ them to those not already familiar with them. The children seemed to be actively enjoying tasks like writing book reviews because their enjoyment came from sharing their enthusiasm for the books with their peers. Although the class teacher was aiming to increase individual enjoyment in reading, what struck me was that it seemed to be affect, as positive flows of intensity between humans and more-than-humans, which really dramatically increased over the year. The individual books, and the library as a whole, seemed to have their own agency in uniting the class and building bonds between individuals, as well as helping to inspire joy in reading.

My first reaction to this article was that it seemed to take an approach that was both radically different and also very familiar. It was, on the one hand, so unusual and brave for a teacher to abandon ‘basics’ like word work. On the

other hand, the way the children were approaching reading felt very similar to my own approach, as an adult who classes reading as a hobby: I swap books and book recommendations with friends, look forward to going to the library to choose new reading material, and have enjoyed being part of book clubs, time permitting. This suggests that many of the conventional school approaches to reading may be actively mitigating against children developing a love of reading: I did wonder what would happen to my views about reading for pleasure if a visit to my local library meant just queuing up at the librarian's desk in order to be given the book that was next on the shelf to the one I was returning?

The study does not mention that any of the children had yet to acquire the very first steps in reading skills, as some of my pupils were at the beginning of their time with me, as all seemed to be able to read some texts with a level of independence. Another study suggests that this approach could be combined with teaching pupils the links between sounds and written symbols, and combining these into words. Nevo and Vaknin-Nusbaum's (2018) describe a reading intervention carried out with kindergarten children in Israel, which combined quite detailed phonological, morphological and vocabulary instruction with interactive storybook reading. The results indicated that the children in the intervention groups made more progress with the reading skills than those in the control group receiving the standard school literacy curriculum, but also seemed to enjoy reading more, and to be motivated to read by themselves more. This intervention seemed to help children to see the use of the skills they were learning, and how to apply them to literacy tasks outside of the lesson in which they were being taught. It would seem very possible to replace the interactive storybook reading with the intra-active approach to reading outlined in Moses and Kelly's (2018) study, in a very innovative way.

3.6. New perspectives on the social aspects of literacy learning.

I first came across Cathy Burnett and Guy Merchant's writing when I read their 2018 article "Affective encounters: enchantment and the possibility of reading for pleasure", following my reading of Jane Bennett's (2001) book about enchantment. I began to read further into their writing, looking at literacy in a much broader way than I had previously, and particularly at their thinking about the importance of the social contexts of literacies. Their writing has also been influential in my methodological approaches, particularly stacking stories and

their Baroque technique, and I will explore that further in Chapter 5, particularly in Sections 5.3.6-7.

Enchantment and reading: In their 2018 article, Burnett and Merchant began by considering the traditional view of reading for pleasure as an internal emotion usually generated by the solitary perusal of printed fiction stories. They felt that a more up to date description of this experience is as an “affective encounter” (a term they draw from Lenters (2016) account of one child’s personal literacy practices) between one, or more than one, person; the content of the text; and the materiality of the way in which it is accessed. They argue that digital forms of literacy, both fiction and non-fiction, have been over-looked as valid and valued sources of reading pleasure, highlighting Bennett’s description of being enchanted as:

> To be both charmed and disturbed: charmed by a fascinating repetition of sounds or images, disturbed to find that, although your sense-perception has become intensified, your background sense of order has flown out the door. (Bennett, 2001:34)

This definition of enchantment would suggest that digital texts, with the possibility of interactivity and video content as well as words and pictures, might even be more enchanting than printed fiction. They illustrated the social potential of digital texts with a vignette from their own home life, as they get carried away exploring the possibility of moving to a remote Scottish island, researching a possible future there using their iPads. Burnett and Merchant (2018a) commented that this sort of enchantment is emergent and unpredictable, unlike the pleasure that is guaranteed by settling down for half an hour with a good novel from a favourite genre.

Burnett and Merchant (2018a) argued for the consideration of the idea of enchantment as a means to broaden our conceptions of reading for pleasure and make it fit for the digital age. They wrote that it covers huge range of experiences, “ranging from immersive to lightweight, sustained to ephemeral, individual to collective, serious to flippant, involving anything from momentary hilarity to deep engagement” (Burnett and Merchant, 2018a:66) with a uniting theme of relationality, not in just the traditional view of literacy as a means for people to communicate with each other, but also as material-social relations embedded in complex and interconnecting networks. They suggested that this

has some important consequences for literacy in schools, one being the need to teach digital literacy, particularly critical considerations of online texts, and another in seeing the potentiality of literacy done in this way, following the unplanned encounters children are led to by their interests and explorations, rather than having one set end point in view.

This thinking was very important for my study, as it prompted me to realise how often moments of enchantment occurred in my lessons, and also how impossible it would be to plan for these to happen: instead they need to be celebrated and built on as they happen. Another very interesting concept developed by Burnett and Merchant (2018b) is that of “literacy-as-event”.

Literacy-as-event: In their exploration of new ways to conceptualise literacy, Burnett and Merchant (2018b) identified two possible definitions at either end of a continuum of possibilities. At one extreme is the school curriculum, in which literacy is broken down into subsets of skills, which are then taught individually, and pupils are trained to try to use the maximum possible amount of them. Burnett and Merchant (2018b) extend the continuum at the opposite end to include:

> … the *relations mediated through the process of making meaning*: the new collaborations, stories, conceptualisations, directions, intentions and so on that emerge as people engage in making meanings, all of which can and often do turn out in unexpected ways.” (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b:8) (*italics in original)*

Using this conception, literacy happens in school not only in phonics lessons but also in the role play area when children construct stories and act them out together, or when they tell an adult or a peer about a picture they are painting. These examples illustrate how much more literacy, when it is defined in this way, can be seen as entangled with other people and the material world, as the props or the paint inspire the children to add to their creativity. Burnett and Merchant (2018b) build on the phrase “literacy event”, which was a concept developed as part of the New Literacy Studies (Street, 1993) movement to reposition literacy as a social and cultural phenomenon as well as a cognitive activity. They rephrase it as “literacy-as-event”, focusing more on the emerging and developing relationships between humans, more-than-humans and time and place, including noticing interruptions and times of inactivity as well as more

purposeful activity. Affect is also included in “literacy-as-event” (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b), as they argued that the meanings made can be felt as well as understood, and the focus is not only on what literacy is being made in the moment, but where it might lead in the future. In an earlier article, Burnett and Merchant (2016) had explored the use of the term “Baroque technique” as a way of looking at the richness, intricacies, messiness, and sensory aspects of literacies, which seemed particularly apt as the they described the Baroque movement was as “disruptive power” (Burnett and Merchant, 2016:262), a response to the rationality and orderliness of the Reformation. This would seem to be an even more useful concept, with the addition of even more layers of complexity in the research of literacies.

This idea of “literacy-as-event” (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b) was transformative for my study, because it reframed its focus for me. I had begun by seeing it as a literacy intervention that was augmented by activities to develop self-esteem and increase enjoyment of literacy learning. I moved to seeing the whole of the time I spent with my pupils as being “literacy-as-event” (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b), including chatting about our weekends on the way to our room, or playing literacy games, or making little books based on pupils’ interests, just as much as completing the structured activities. It regards the relationships formed in teaching situations as integral to the process, rather than a pleasant (hopefully!) addition. It also gave me not only a framework to describe how I improvised activities, resources and strategies, based both on what seemed to appeal to my pupils, and also on where I had seen they had potential to develop next. In addition, it also helped to justify doing literacy in this emergent way instead of the more pre-planned, schooled way.

Affect, meaning making and literacies: Burnett and Merchant (2018b) remind us that texts may be produced as part of meaning-making events involving assemblages of humans, more-than-humans and affective intensities, but they then become part of assemblages themselves as material objects, and generate affective forces on others. They described how texts can set off on journeys that their original authors could hardly have envisaged, particularly in this digital age, when texts can as easily be photographed, tweeted and then broadcast, as much as, alternatively, sinking quickly into unnoticed oblivion. They wrote that this raises questions about what reading and writing ‘do’, and

this was helpful in prompting me to think about what texts 'did' in our lessons, whether they were those made by others that I used as resources, or the ones we made in lessons.

Relational literacies: Looking at literacy in this way has led Burnett and Merchant (2018b:2) to the conclusion that it is: "never an isolated activity, but is always in relation with other people and things". This fits in with the more conventional view of literacy as a form of written communication, too, with the traditional emphasis that good writing takes close account of the audience it is being written for. The implication of this view is that the quality of literacy experiences will be impacted by the quality of the relationships between the people involved in the literacy activity, and the match between the people and the materials being used, which is at the heart of my study.

3.7. Taking a listening stance

This final set of authors are the ones I came to read only as I began to think deeply about my data, and the topic of listening kept presenting itself, so I decided that I needed to explore it in more depth. Listening to children seems to be vital for several different reasons. One is the ethical importance of listening to children, which is enshrined in United Nations legislation: Article 12 of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child states that human rights apply equally to children as to adults, and that therefore their opinions should be listened to, and acted upon as much as possible. Another is to tailor the curriculum more closely to match the pupils' learning needs and styles. Schultz et al. (2008) write about this in the context of preparing largely white, middle class teaching students in America to teach in very diverse communities. Their thoughts on listening to find out more about the local community in which a school is situated, while very important, are less relevant to my study because my study is located in part of my own community. However, Schutz et al.'s (2008) concept of teaching with a "listening stance", particularly listening to individual children's likes, interests and social and learning styles and listening to the rhythms and silences of the classroom, does seem very pertinent to my study. They advocate using a listening stance to acquire knowledge on which to base teaching programmes that are relevant and closely tailored to pupils' interests and needs, and therefore are engaging and effective. They add that this deep knowledge is based on a fundamental respect for the pupils both as

individuals and as members of their community, and is arrived at by approaching teaching with questions as well as answers. Schultz et al.'s (2008) writing about listening to the rhythms and silences of the classroom is also relevant to 1:1 teaching, because listening to pupils' reactions (both verbal and non-verbal) indicates how well the lesson content is matched to both their learning needs and preferences. In addition, listening carefully as a child reads tells you what skills they are using confidently, which they are struggling to acquire or have a partial grasp of, and the nature of their emotional responses from comments or body language. Schultz at al. (2008) acknowledged that there are considerable tensions, especially for very new teachers, in balancing the demands of compulsory curricula with finding opportunities for teaching based on the information gained by listening in this way, which need careful negotiation to resolve. This resonated for me with some points in my study in which I experience similar tensions between following school's expectations of literacy learning and my feelings that I should focus more on my pupils' individual interests.

"Listening to my readers" is a phrase that is used very commonly in the first few years of schooling, and while it can be a perfunctory check, done against time, with one ear, while writing down the next book in a reading record, it can also be quite a profound experience for both adult and child. Both Bronwyn Davies (2014) and Clark, Kjørholt and Moss (2005) take a very broad look at listening to children in early years settings, and several points seem relevant to my practice too.

"Beyond listening": in her chapter within Clark et.al's (2005) book, Carlina Rinaldi, the former director of early years centres in Reggio Emilia, Italy, listed twelve separate elements involved in listening properly (as opposed to listening for a socially acceptable gap to jump into the speaking role instead). In this list, Rinaldi (2005) suggests that listening is: generated by, and generates emotion; is both welcoming of difference but also sensitive to patterns that connect; involves all our senses, not just hearing; involves interpretation, but formulates questions rather than answers; legitimises and validates; takes time and a willingness to be changed by what is heard; and is the premise for any learning relationship (Rinaldi, 2005:19-21). Applying this sort of listening in an educational setting, Rinaldi (2005) warned, can take time, effort, and the

willingness to be challenged, but can often be rewarded with joy, amazement and enthusiasm. She also wrote that it shifts the focus of learning from being solely delivered by a teacher to pupils, to also being generated by the children themselves, and in the interactions between the children, and between the children and adults. This is possible, she argued, because even very young children have a voice, and understand how to listen and how to be listened to, as part of a sociability that is an innate part of their being, not taught by adults. In their introduction, Clark et.al (2005) discussed the implications of Rinaldi's ideas about listening in an educational context. They wrote that children communicate through a wider range of communication channels than adults tend to (Rinaldi (2005) described this as the hundred languages of childhood), so therefore listening to children requires adults to become more multilingual in terms of considering how children communicate in ways beyond language. They view this decentring of verbal language as opening a political debate, because it questions the power of certain knowledges, and certain classes. It also throws into doubt some of what Clark, Kjørholt, Moss (2005) term the "dichotomous constructions of subjectivity" (Clark, Kjørholt, Moss, 2005:176) often used when talking about children, because classifying children in a binary way as, for example, either mature or immature, vulnerable or competent or dependent or independent, obscures how children can instead be moving from, perhaps, dependence to independence, but in relationship with adults or peers. Davies (2014) viewed this as a political issue: she commented that most western governments embrace an approach in which children are constantly judged, competition in schools encouraged, and safety nets are removed. The antidote to this, according to the authors of both books, is listening to children, rather than rushing to categorise or measure them, which is more likely to enable adults to nice these more subtle changes and connections.

Clark et.al (2005) also discussed the concept of a "pedagogy of listening", developed by the educators in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia. This turns on its head the conventional view of teaching, that teachers talk, and children listen. Instead, it starts from the premise that children come to a teaching and learning situation with curiosity, questions, theories and interpretations, and are active participants in generating their own learning experiences. This then requires teachers to listen to their pupils, and work with them in the planning and

implementation of learning activities, shifting the focus to the children's self-learning and learning that is achieved by adults and children together (Rinaldi 2005). This is more than just a pedagogical strategy: Clerk et.al (2005) wrote that it is also an ethical stance, as it is predicated on valuing individuals and reciprocal communication, in contrast to the power imbalance generated when one person is always the talker.

Eide and Winger's chapter in Clark et.al's (2005) book is also very relevant to my thesis because they assert that being listened to is part of being able to create one's own identity. They comment that children growing up now in modern Western society, as the children in my study are, are surrounded by complexity, diversity, and rapidly changing contexts. These generate many levels of choice which mean that identity is constantly being constructed and negotiated by children, and they are often members of more than one community or culture, constantly developing in what Eide and Winger (2005) describe as a process of exploration, and exchange of opinions with others. They wrote that this is a very challenging process for anyone, but being able to tell who you are, and feel that you are being heard as you do so, is a very important part of this process, and this requires an accepting listener. Helping my pupils to explore, develop and evolve their identities as learners is a very important aspect of my work with my pupils, and Eide and Winger (2005) highlight this sort of listening as a possible contribution to this process.

Listening to children: Davies (2014) conceptualised the sort of listening discussed in Clark et.al's (2005) book as "emergent listening", drawing on posthumanist thinking, particularly that of Karen Barad (2007). Davies (2014) characterised emergent listening as the willingness to fully hear what another is saying, including things that may challenge our existing ways of thinking or being, and thus being open to being changed ourselves by what we are hearing. She viewed this as a very deep experience, and wrote that:

> being open, and being vulnerable to being affected by the other, is how we accomplish our humanity (Davies, 2014:10).

Listening without judgement, Davies (2014) added, not only helps the speaker to fully express what they truly feel and think, but also helps the listener to gain new understandings and connections, so that new ways of being, both individually and together, emerge for both parties, this process taking place in

the Deleuzian space of differenciation. Davies (2014) described this form of differenciation as the production of something new, which draws on what is already known, but is generated by the movements of life itself, and which in turns generates new movement.

Davies' (2014) concept of emergent listening seems very important for this thesis, for two reasons. Firstly, it seems to suggest some of the mechanisms I use to adapt my teaching to individual pupil's learning, and emotional, needs, especially as Davies (2014) writes that emergent listening involves not just spoken communication but perceptions of flows of affect too, because it highlights the reciprocal, bi-directional, nature of listening, and how it affects both speaker and listener. Secondly, emergent listening can also form part of qualitative data collection, when a researcher listens to children in this way, and records the impressions they gain in this process. Davies (2014) explored the posthumanist perspectives on this, writing that Barad's (2007) thinking on diffraction is particularly significant here too, as a way to explain how a speaker's words are interpreted in a unique way by each listener. Barad (2007) used the physics of waves to produce the metaphor of diffraction, whereby waves in water that passes through or round obstacles are sent off in new or unexpected directions (Mazzei, 2014). This concept of diffraction can be applied to moments when two ways of thinking are combined together, not in the traditional way of "compare and contrast", but as a way to produce new concepts or understandings, when fresh angles are taken on new knowledge. Listening always involves the hearer's perceptions as well as the speaker's words, and in this process meanings may be distorted, but equally may be enriched or amplified for a wider audience.

3.8. Shaping new approaches to my research

The reading journey described above changed my perceptions of literacy support teaching from being strongly cognitively-based and teacher-centric to taking a much broader view. I became much more aware of other aspects of learning to read that were less often written about or discussed, partly because they were more emotionally based and less easy to identify or quantify, which I have come to see as the "more-than-cognitive" aspects of learning to read, as I will discuss further in Chapter 7.

My new thinking combined the cognitive aspects of my practice with a more socially based conceptualisation of literacy, and then added in posthumanist perspectives on aspects such as the agency of material elements like resources, time and space, plus also of ideas and flows of affect. This decision was based in my understanding of posthumanist thinking as de-centring, but not removing, the human (Kuby et al 2019:6). As my practice was very strongly based in finding the right resources for individual learners, a consideration of how the agency of the more-than-human intra-acted with the agency of both myself and the children seemed an important area to explore. From this perspective, the term 'literacy' is more usefully broadened out into 'literacies', including a wider range of ways of communicating, both with signs, in the form of words, pictures or diagrams, as well as spoken or enacted words. In addition, it also involves:

- The desire to communicate and connect with others, as a strong part of being human for most people, helping to generate "literacy desirings" (Kuby et al, 2016) in children that can usually form a foundation to build literacy learning upon.
- Literacies as primarily a form of communication, usually taking place in between people, and therefore bound up in the relationships within which they are produced.
- Literacies having the potential to generate positive "flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007) that can be intense enough to produce captivating feelings of enchantment, when the right match between the reader and text is found. This intensity of affect engages learners with texts, unless something happens to disrupt this relationship.
- While cognitive aspects of literacy learning can be usefully structured and planned, the more affective aspects are less predictable, requiring flexibility and sensitivity to be able to discern and work with them productively.
- Although literacies can be just text or pictures on paper or screen, they are perhaps more likely for young children than for adults to be bound up with objects and movement and play.
- Conventionally, the brain is thought of as the most active part of the body in reading, but other parts of the body are more involved than is often recognised. This can be in the physical holding, looking, and page turning

or swiping, but also as internal emotions and affective flows are registered bodily too.

- The physicality of both the materials used in literacy activities and also the environment in which literacy happens is much more significant to how participants feel than is often recognised.
- The combination of these ideas together is summed up in Burnett and Merchant's (2018b) concept of "literacy-as-event", in which literacies are seen as inseparable from the social context they take place in, the material forms they are expressed in, and the affective flows that are generated.

This reading journey had also changed my ontological and epistemological perspectives, both in general, and also in terms of my research. Theories like entanglement and intra-actions (Barad, 2007), and flows of affect (Stewart, 2007) seemed to resonate with my own perceptions of life, as well as my support teaching practice. I began to realise that it was these sorts of connections and flows that I was working with as part of what I had thought of as my 'teacher's intuition', and I wished to explore this further. In order to do this, I decided not to continue exploring the links between my pupils' language skills and their literacy learning, as I had originally intended, but to focus on thinking about these broader aspects of literacy learning and teaching as I began to analyse the data. However, my delivery of the literacy intervention in the second year of my study remained very much the same as the first year, because the reading I was doing, mostly at the same time, did not suggest to me that anything I had been doing was not suitable, but rather that there was much more there already, happening alongside the cognitive aspects, that deserved to be explored and expanded upon. This seemed to me to be an important line of inquiry: to explore support teaching as "literacy-as-event" (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b), in order to develop approaches that would meet the needs of a wider range of learners, and to support practitioners in building their skills bases further.

Chapter 4. In some ways everything had changed, but in others, nothing at all: working towards a new methodology

In this chapter I discuss how I changed the focus of my study between the first and the second year of my fieldwork, and how this impacted upon my methodological approaches. I explore how moving away from the mainly cognitive aspects of my reading intervention, to look instead at the affective aspects of learning to read through a posthumanist lens, raised some quite complex questions about my methodological choices. This was due to posthumanist thinking raising possibilities of a wider range of ways to 'know', apart from the purely cognitive; more complex views about relationships between people and between people and material objects, and also questioning assumptions about the supremacy of logic and structure in written texts. My new theoretical framework also meant that I needed to reconsider not only how to analyse and present my data, but also what exactly my data consisted of. I describe the reading and thinking journey that helped me to develop a methodology that seemed more appropriate for my new research questions. This journey began while I was collecting the data in Year 2 of my fieldwork (October 2018 – April 2019), but mostly developed after this, as I began to get to grips with how to think about the data I had collected then.

4.1. Wrestling with concepts: exploring methodological dilemmas

4.1.1. More similarities than first meet the eye

Although it may seem that there was a radical methodological change away from my initial more conventional mixed methods approach towards my re-theorised posthumanist perspectives, on closer reflection there are more links than may first meet the eye. My original theoretical framework was pragmatism, particularly as delineated by the philosopher and educationalist John Dewey (1859-1952), whose work Guernsey (2017) describes "a philosophy on its way to post-humanism" (Guernsey, 2017:246). Guernsey (2017) writes in depth about this, but the main ways he identifies in which Dewey's writing seems to foreshadow posthumanism are in his ideas about embodied language, and communication beyond language; interconnections between living organisms and their environments; immanent meanings; and non-linear trajectories. There seem to be many resonances with Dewey's philosophical writing and that of

some of the authors I have written about in my Literature Review, for example Dewey wrote:

> The sense of a thing, on the other hand, is an immediate and immanent meaning; it is meaning which is itself felt or directly had…the meaning of the whole situation is apprehended as sense. (Dewey, in Guernsey 2017:250)

This seems to be moving towards Katherine Stewart's (2007) writing about affect, and also to Deleuze's ideas of immanence. Dewey also wrote about embodied language:

> But bodily activity and physical embodiment are the material aspects of language. They are not two things, meanings and material embodiment, passengers and a vehicle that transports them. Language is meaning and sound or visible form in complete fusion with one another (in Guernsey, 2017:251)

Again this seems to be 'on the way to' the writings of Thiel (2015) and Jones (2016), which I have discussed earlier in Chapter 3.4. Guernsey (2017) also writes about Dewey's views on the lack of clear boundaries between bodies, minds and environments, which is very resonant of Barad's (2007) thinking about intra-actions and entanglement, discussed in Chapter 3.5.

When I began reading about Action Research methodology, the approach that appealed to me the most was that of McNiff and Whitehead (2010), because they emphasised the process of generating questions about one's own practice that open up new possibilities, rather than focusing on measuring behavioural outcomes (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010:41). They wrote in terms of deconstructing and decentring, the co-creation of knowledge, practice as a continually developing process, and living out personal values in both practice and research. This situated them squarely in the more social and cultural approach to educational research, rather than the purely cognitive and behavioural, suggesting a smaller methodological jump to the newer research methodologies that I consequently used.

4.1.2. My new methodological challenges

When I was working within an Action Research design, there were established conventions about what constituted data, how it was collected, and how it could be presented (e.g. McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). I have described my original

plans for my data collection in Chapter 2, and my plans to write it up as a series of case studies. As it still felt important to write about each individual child, it seemed fairly straightforward to move to using vignettes instead, as vignettes enabled me to do this in a slightly less formal way than a case study would. However, exploring posthumanist perspectives opened up some very big differences in epistemological stances, especially when thinking about data, in how it is possible to know about the world around us, and what constitutes 'knowledge'. It became clear to me that I needed to change my methodological approaches to fit my new focus better, so I began to read again to identify new possibilities. The questions that I particularly needed answers for were: what, from a posthumanist perspective, would now constitute my data? How would I identify that data from my fieldwork experiences? And how would I make sense of that data, and then present it to my reader, both within, and in addition to, my vignettes?

4.1.3. Moving towards capturing connections

Changing my theoretical framework to include posthumanist thinking raised questions for both my methodology and also, consequently, my research methods. There seem to be two main areas in which posthumanist approaches differ from more conventional ones. Michael (2020) commented that traditional qualitative methodologies involve using analytical methods like coding, which aim to separate out individual elements, whereas posthumanist thinking focuses on entanglements, in which the connections are often the most interesting aspects. Michael (2020) suggests arts-based methodologies as a way to both include elements of the materiality that is part of posthumanist conceptions of entanglements. She described how she produced a series of drawings to present some of her research findings, which enabled her to illustrate the interconnections she observed. Although my drawing skills are not at a level for this, it does seem important to include a visual representation of some of the resources I used in my intervention, which would give them a presence in my thesis that is more vivid than verbal descriptions, and is in keeping with posthumanist thinking on the agency of material objects. My exploration of arts-based onto-epistemologies also included reading Franks and Thomson's (2019) article, which captured my imagination with the idea that sometimes not knowing can be more important than knowing, that a neatly delineated

argument may be less telling than something more fragmented and episodic, and that the process of ‘knowing’ can be as much affective as cognitive. However, as a very new researcher, embracing ‘not knowing’ is a very daunting concept: might my reader just be reminded of the Emperor’s New Clothes, and come to the conclusion that I was, in reality, just completely clueless?

4.1.4. Moving away from representationalism

Maggie MacLure (2011) highlighted another difficulty in trying to apply posthumanist thinking to research methodology: that new ideas continue to be written about in the language that evolved to express the ideas that originated in the times of the Enlightenment. More traditional thinking was based in rationality and science, and so ideas were discussed in very logical, dispassionate language, and structured in a sequential and hierarchical way. MacLure (2011) argued that if new ideas are to be explained and described, then a new way of using language, and new ways of structuring the writing, need to be developed. She wrote that there remains a strong inclination in qualitative researchers to explain what they think their observations mean, remaining in the discursive paradigm that they imagine they have moved beyond. This way of writing MacLure (2011) described as representationalism, which she believed should now be in ruins, ready to make way for a new way of writing:

> One way of working the ruins of representation might therefore be to focus on those phenomena that lie at the limits of language and the body, that qualitative research generally prefers, or needs to forget: stuff of the body, of affects, and the inchoate feelings that swarm in among our supposedly rationalist arguments, undoing our certainty and our selfcertainty. (MacLure, 2011:1003).

MacClure therefore advocated acknowledging that language is not just generated by the brain, but also in and through the physical body. This would indicate the inclusion of more of the physical processes of knowing, for example gut reactions and flows of intensities of affect between people (Stewart, 2007), or between people and things. In a more recent article, MacLure (2020) suggested a really radical approach, building on these ideas, which she described as “divination”. She elucidated further:

> What would formerly have been understood as data analysis would become something more like a Deleuzian (2000) “apprenticeship to signs”: a matter of cryptic encounters with the enigmatic surplus that

> inheres in signs and events (p.5). Divination would demand techniques that are symbolic, intensive, and diagrammatic—ways of reading the world and tapping into the forces that compose events to unfold their ramifications and draw lines from the known to the unknown (Deleuze, 2003). (MacLure, 2020:502).

Although I found MacLure's (2020) references to the darker aspects of divination did not sit well with my personal ontology, this article did raise the possibility that affect could itself become a methodological approach. MacLure (2020) discussed using symbols and signs as part of the divination process, and this resonated with me, because there seemed to be at least one particular moment with each pupil that stuck in my mind, and that seemed to me to be symbolic of my experiences either with that child, or with my practice. In some ways, they could be taken as a dynamic diagram of a specific relationship or process. MacLure wrote:

> From, on one hand, lengthy, careful immersion in the "field," and on the other hand, the chance encounter with the coalescence of forces that issue in and as individual examples or events of "data." These examples lodge themselves in the mind, body, and memory as (enticing) problems, precisely because they carry presentiments of their wider, virtual connectibility, coupled with the intimation of something singular and irreducible, that is exceeding the ambit of conventional method … (MacLure, 2020:506)

This seems to tie in with Grenfell's (2019) suggestion of using Tyler's (1986) concept of using "evocation" in writing about ethnography, to avoid the epistemological pitfalls of representation, which again has magical connotations. This approach raised two challenging questions for me: if exploring intensities of flows of affect is one of the aims of my study, then how better to identify these than by paying attention to the affective flows I perceived when reading or writing about my work with my pupils? Could finding examples that evoke the affective qualities of the relationship or processes I am trying to describe, be viewed as using affective intensity as a method? This approach would avoid trying to find explanations, or trying to shoehorn findings into theories, which MacLure (2010) also warned against in an earlier article. It would be more a process of identifying what came to *matter* (Barad, 2007).

However, as I continued to read, I realised that the key thinking for me in developing a methodology that sat well with a posthumanist approach was

Barad (2007) challenging the separation of epistemology from ontology: she believed that a person's ideas about what constituted knowledge and knowing could not be separated out from their ways of being in the world, as the two were irreducibly linked. Ethical considerations therefore also stem directly from an individual's onto-epistemological standpoint, because they are based in judgements about how each individual feels it is important to be and act in the world, rather than just being externally imposed codes of behaviour.

4.1.5. Drawing on feminist theory

While a number of the authors I had read came under the umbrella of "feminist new materialists", for example Karen Barad (2007), I had not explored the "feminist" aspects until I started to read in more depth about methodological approaches appropriate for a posthumanist approach. I had not previously considered reading support to be a feminist issue, mainly because stereotypical gender expectations have traditionally been seen as giving girls an advantage in learning to read over boys. Boys are more likely to need additional support in learning to read than girls are, which has been attributed to later development in language skills, and less positive views about reading (Marinak and Gambrell, 2010). However, I began to read about the more recent developments in post-feminist perspectives, which move beyond working to reduce barriers and inequalities for women, towards moving away from binary divides across a wider range of attributes, in order to produce a generally more inclusive and diverse ethos.

My introduction came through Belenky et al.'s (1986) "Women's Way of Knowing", as I was particularly struck by their description of the more traditionally female model of connected thinking. Belenky et al. (1986) contrasted connected thinking with the more traditionally male approach of separate thinking: separate thinking takes a more detached, logical position from which to consider whether ideas are right or wrong, or knowledge correct or incorrect, and is at the heart of critical thinking and debating skills. Connected thinking, on the other hand, is based more in valuing relationships, emotion and empathy as part of the process of learning, and is associated with a more collaborative, non-judgemental approach. This model was very much in accord with my thinking about reading: learning to read has traditionally been seen very much in the 'separate thinking' mode, as a process of gradually acquiring more

and more knowledge and skills, in ways that can be measured and evaluated objectively with tests and assessments, which can in turn be compared to expected norms. My study, on the other hand, is exploring the affective and relational aspects of learning to read, in a way that seems to fit much more with a 'connected thinking' approach, which has not been so widely used in investigating the process of learning to read. While learning to read itself does not seem to be a feminist issue, it could be argued that reading support fits into this paradigm, because the most affective and relational aspects have been seen as part of a 'motherly' approach to support teaching, and have therefore been less valued.

Feminist relational new materialist theory contributes to a research methodology by highlighting issues of inequalities, and supporting the disadvantaged, and trying to identify ways to improve support for children learning to read could be considered to fall into this category. Otterstad (2019) advocated the feminist aspect of this methodology as a particularly effective way to critique discourses that position children socially as "vulnerable", "at risk" or "disadvantaged", which really resonated for me, especially as it raises some complex issues that had long been troubling me. While it seems to me to be important to acknowledge that some children do have greater difficulty in learning to read than others, to ensure that the old judgements of "just lazy" never return, it is also equally important to ensure that terms such as "specific learning disability" or "dyslexia" do not obscure the learning that children *are* doing effectively, the desire to read that still remains, and the strategies to cope in a system not geared up for their needs. On occasion, these strategies may cause problems for the adults around them, but are often effective for the child themselves. The new materialist aspect of this approach would involve combining this with investigating the agency of matter within this connected model, by considering, for example, the agency of resources within teaching, and also the role the body plays in learning to read, which often seems to be neglected in more conventional methodologies.

4.1.6. Beginning with autoethnography

I began by working with autoethnography as a key part of my research methodology because I felt I could not write about my work with the children without acknowledging how much my own perspectives, feelings and past

experiences were a part of every teaching decision or research analysis I made. Autoethnography embraced this, as it involves the writer researching themselves, not just in terms of how their own life experiences have unfolded, which is autobiography, but crucially situating the self in a cultural and social setting, and examining how this setting has influenced or constrained how the self has developed, which is the 'ethno' element (Winkler, 2018). Even more complexity is added to this form of inquiry with the reflexivity required to acknowledge that the autoethnographer is not only being influenced themselves by the situation they are researching, but that the process of being involved in the research is also influencing how the situation they are researching is evolving (Lapadat, 2017). An additional element of awareness of the history of how the social relationships came into being (Adams et. al., 2015) adds to the potential for richness of description. Autoethnography has been criticised as a research methodology for being self-indulgent (Winkler, 2018), but there are two main arguments in its defence. The first is the ethical argument about whether it is possible to write about other people's experiences without altering the veracity of the researched person's voice through the filter of the writer's own perceptions and views, and whether instead it is only one's own experiences that can be written about with any degree of veracity (Lapadat, 2017). This also opens up spaces for very personal experiences to be explored in a way that might be very intrusive if carried out by a stranger-researcher, but gives very valuable information to those working to improve practice in the area, for example Davidson's study of her experiences of perinatal loss (Davidson, 2011).

The second argument for autoethnography as a methodology is that it is not merely self-reflection, but should also involve elements of what is conventionally termed triangulation to support evidence, in the way that other qualitative methodologies also use. Winkler (2018) advised using direct quotes from field notes or journals, rather than just memories, and including observations from others involved in the situation being studied, in the form of interviews, for example, or peer feedback. The social and cultural aspects of autoethnography entail writing about the self in relationship with others (Klevan et al. 2018), and acknowledging the contributions others have made which has supported the authors own achievements (Winkler, 2018).

At first, autoethnography seemed to lend itself well to a posthumanist theoretical lens: Adams et al. (2011) commented that autoethnography frequently focuses on issues related to identity, and how identity is “unstable”, in that it changes with time and in relation to others, which resonates with Deleuzian thinking on emergence, discussed in Chapter 3.4.1. Warfield (2019) explores how autoethnography can be approached so that it decentres the human and makes more space for matter, for example by considering the agency of the material objects used to collect data, particularly when digital means are used. This can include aspects like interviewees finding digital recording while they are talking to be uncomfortable, or technical problems with apparatus forcing changes in plans. Lenz Taguchi (2009) concurred with this emphasis on the agency of the more-than-human in data collection, writing that photographic data collection can be influenced by the camera’s affordances, and that every shot taken includes some elements but excludes those not in the frame of that particular shot. Warfield (2019) commented that changes made to data collection methods caused by problems like these are often glossed over in traditional accounts of research, swept under the carpet as a glitch in the smooth unfolding of an otherwise successful research design, but a posthumanist perspective would see these as interesting developments in the emergence of the research design as it intra-acts with other elements of the assemblage it is a part of.

4.1.7. Choosing diffractive ethnography

However, even Warfield’s (2019) approach is still strongly human-centric, and Jessica Gullion’s (2018) concept of “diffractive ethnography” seemed to offer the methodology most in tune with my interpretation of posthumanist thinking, especially as she draws on similar writers, particularly Karen Barad (2007) and Jane Bennett (2010). Gullion (2018) positions ethnography, as a study of aspects of a society or a specific culture, in the context of social sciences research, which she considers as now entering a third phase. The first phase, she wrote, was a more scientific approach, looking at macro levels and predicting cause and effect, while the second moved towards looking more at individuals, particularly how they make meanings and form identities, for example feminist or queer theories. The phase we are entering now Gullion (2018) described as one of “relational assemblages” (Gullion, 2018:21), based on a flat ontology, in which hierarchies of knowledge and agency are set aside,

replaced instead by consideration of how different elements come together to create something new.

This approach decentres the role of the researcher, repositioning it as just one of the elements in a research assemblage, and in this process also sidesteps the importance of reflexivity, which Gullion (2018) feels puts the researcher even more centre-stage by focusing on their own thoughts and feelings even more intensely. She wrote that instead:

> In a diffractive ethnography, the researcher is part of the instrumentation, filtering information and giving form to reality in relational intra-actions with other entities (Gullion, 2018:121-2).

Gullion (2018) added that the researcher's role lies in connecting things in a non-hierarchical manner, and the specific way they choose to do this by their writing is just one of the many possible lines of flight that could arise from the research assemblage. While the researcher is undoubtedly a creative force within the research assemblage, by organising the words, they are not the only one, as the other human and more-than-human elements can also play a similar role. The researcher's creative role is not situated on the outside, looking in, but unfolds within the assemblage, mapping the ebbs and flows of the entanglements that they are themselves a part of. Gullion (2018) argued that this approach means moving away from asking what an event means, towards asking instead how it works, including investigating aspects like the affective flows and power balances within the relations produced. She warns about the possible impact upon data analysis:

> The notions of macro and micro collapse in on each other in the ontological turn. Our time is thus spent not identifying causal factors in a linear model, but rather with the identifications of becomings in assemblages, the hanging together of affects and agencies, and the foldings. We must not fall into the trap of solidifying theory or of forcing the research to "fit" the theory. (Gullion, 2018:104)

Posthumanist thinking also underpins Gullion's (2018) writing about the role of objects and other entities in research assemblages, which Bennett described as "thing power" (Bennett 2010:xvi). Gullion positioned posthumanists' ideas about the agency of material objects somewhere in between Cartesian passive inanimateness, and Indigenous beliefs about material elements in the natural world being imbued with spirituality. This middle ground, Gullion (2018) wrote, is

best characterised by Barad's (2007) concept of 'performativity'. She differentiated this from performance, which is a deliberate and conscious act, as it is, instead, about how one or more aspects of an object or idea can impact upon other things or people who come into relation with it as part of an assemblage, and influence the way in which events unfold. This concept seems very aptly illustrated by her quote from Kohn (2013:21) that agency is "this strange way of getting something done without doing anything at all".

Translating Gullion's (2018) thinking into a methodological approach for this study lies in her explanation of what diffractive ethnography means in practice. She described diffractive ethnography as a way of mapping how assemblages come into being and how they dissolve; how relations within them, not just between people but also between people and things, make things happen in the assemblage; what flows of affect there are, and what they are making possible; and, particularly relevant for my study, how processes of change are unfolding.

My role as a researcher in this methodology is to explore phenomena, which Barad described as:

> differential patterns of mattering ('diffraction patterns') produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production, where apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practice—specific material (re) configurations of the world—which come to matter. (Barad 2007:104)

This means trying to see what happens when I bring my reading intervention, including myself and all the resources that I use in it, into the literacy learning experiences of the pupils I work with, including all the various emotions and affective intensities that they experience around different literacies. What happens might include flows of affect, new becomings, in terms of increased (hopefully) learning and self-confidence, and new ways of being, for myself as well as for my pupils. It involves acknowledging that by writing in my research journal and planning documents I am discursively framing what it might be possible for me to observe, but also by the agentic nature of writing, becoming aware of new perspectives to observe through.

4.2. Adapting my methods for Year 2 of my fieldwork

4.2.1. Continuity of methods

Looking back over the data I had collected in my research diary and lesson evaluations in the first year of my fieldwork (examples of which can be found in Appendices A-D), I realised that I had written in quite a lot of detail about the emotional responses of both my pupils and myself, and how these seemed to interact with the teaching process, as this has always played a key role in my practice. I decided to continue with my research journal and lesson evaluations as before, because this still seemed suited to my new focus. The staff feedback interviews had obviously been pivotal, so these would be continued too. As discussed earlier, I had decided to continue with the teaching intervention, which I had adapted over several years to suit my way of teaching as closely as possible, although I intended to work with the structure a little more loosely, and to explore how I adapted the programme to individual pupils in more detail. I would, however, need to explore ways to analyse this data and to present it in ways more appropriate for my new theoretical framework, and this process is discussed in the next chapter.

4.2.2. Selecting my participants for Year 2 of my study

At the end of the summer term in July 2018, I discussed with Sue who to work with in the following year. In her leadership role, Sue had an overview of pupils beyond her class who needed the sort of support she had seen me provide, so she suggested including a younger pupil, Alicia, who was still only 5, and so would be moving into Year 1, as her rate of progress in acquiring literacy skills was particularly concerning school staff. We settled on a further three pupils whose reading skills were considerably lower than school expected for their age, including Emily who did not speak out loud in school. Although I was rather nervous about including Emily, because I had no experience or specific knowledge in this field and did not wish to raise false hopes that I would be able to be of any more help than she had so far received, it seemed to fit with my new emphasis on emotions and confidence. As both her parents and school were really keen for her to have any support that might be beneficial in any way, I decided to try my best, and hope that I might be able to help a little.

The inclusion of Alicia, who was not only very young but also making progress in very small steps, and additionally of Emily, for whom I had to plan activities that did not require her to speak out loud, meant that I needed to adapt my intervention even more than I had expected. I still kept to the termly individual targets and plans, as I found they helped to keep me focused. I was also working with two teachers now: Alicia's teacher Rachel was very keen to have some additional support for Alicia, as she was very concerned about her happiness in school as well as her progress, so she was very welcoming and helpful. Rachel was happy to read and sign the staff information and consent sheets as Sue had done previously. As the two teachers worked to the same morning timetable, it was easy to coordinate my sessions across the two classes. I continued to be able to use the small office, and to volunteer in Sue's class in the mornings as before.

4.2.3. The end of Year 2 of my fieldwork

I began the new academic year in September 2018 with just some volunteering as a T.A. in Sue's class in the mornings. On 10th October 2018, I began my intervention by working initially with Emily, adding in further pupils after a week or two. By the end of April 2019, I felt I had written enough for my study, and that we had come to a point when an intensive intervention was no longer appropriate, partly due to the point in the academic year, and also in the content we had covered. I then completed the staff feedback interviews with both teachers. It would have been useful to have been able to follow up my participants from both studies to see how their literacy skills kept developing after my intervention, but the Juniors had different break and lunchtimes, and their own support staff, so I did not manage to make good enough relationships to do this. Sue, in her leadership role, was able to give me feedback about how my original pupils were doing after the end of their first year in the Juniors, which I really appreciated. They were all continuing to make progress with their literacy skills, and in the wider curriculum as well.

By the end of July 2019, I had completed my fieldwork in Greenfields Primary, although I was still volunteering there for a little longer to continue working just with Alicia. I had established a new methodological framework, but I still needed to explore how that would translate into practical ways to analyse my data, and my next chapter describes how I undertook this exploration.

Chapter 5. Developing my approaches to analysing my data

In the course of the preceding four chapters, I have detailed how I planned and carried out the practical aspects of my fieldwork, and also how the focus of my study changed in between Years 1 and 2 of my fieldwork, resulting in a change in the theoretical framework of my study. In addition, I described how the change to working with posthumanist thinking and feminist new materialist theory then prompted me to move to using diffractive ethnography as a key methodological basis. In this chapter, I will explore what the implications of using Gullion's (2018) diffractive ethnographical approach were for both thinking about the nature of my data, and how it can be analysed.

When I began my study as a mixed methods Action Research project, I collected quantitative data based on language and reading skills tests, as well as qualitative data on what I at that point thought of as the emotional and social aspects of my work with my pupils. The qualitative data from my fieldwork consisted mainly of my research journal, which I completed every day, and my evaluated lesson plans (see Appendix A for a list of my data sets, Appendix B for an excerpt from my research diary, and Appendix C for a sample lesson plan). I was originally intending to analyse my data to identify themes by using coding, in a way that seemed most appropriate in the light of the collected data.

Moving to using a posthumanist lens threw all these statements, which had initially seemed quite straightforward, into doubt. I was no longer intending to measure anything at all, and the 'social and emotional' aspects of my study were replaced with concepts like "flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007), "becomings", and "desirings" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), which were even more complex to pin down or describe. I was still intending to draw on my writing in my research journal and lesson evaluations, as these written records were an important part of my practice, but viewing it just as 'data' that could be separated neatly into categories, or used to 'prove' an explanation, now seemed too simplistic. The term 'analysis' now also suggested a level of objectivity that thinking about my intra-actions with my intervention and my pupils precluded. Even thinking about my own role, which had originally been as a participant observer, was now more complicated. I had intended to explore my own reflexivity, but this too required rethinking, as I had come to see myself as so entangled with the children and with the more-than-human elements of my

intervention, and considering my own internal thoughts and emotions without reflecting these entanglements and affective flows began to seem insufficient.

I therefore needed to embark on a process of redefining how the whole concept of my data could be reconfigured through a posthumanist lens, and also how I could think about my experiences in a new way through this lens, and then communicate these thoughts in my thesis. This journey happened in stages, as my thinking evolved, beginning with thinking about the agency of writing, and considering reflexive thematic analysis, before moving towards developing some strategies that seemed to be more in tune with posthumanist thinking, especially ideas about 'flat' ontologies, and a move towards non-representation.

5.1. Re-framing writing as an agential element of a research assemblage

In the preceding chapter, I began to explore Gullion's (2018) thinking about diffractive ethnography, in which the researcher, the writing process and the material, as well as discursive elements, of the data are all parts of the research assemblage. As such, all are entangled with each other, and all have the potential to have some agency in how the research process unfolds. In this light, my 'writing' as data is most aptly viewed as both a verb and a noun: it consists both of the words that I produced at the time, and consequently re-read many times later on, and also the process by which I produced these words. In this section, I explore some of the ways in which this might have been enacted.

5.1.1. Writing down/up/about

Although she was writing from the perspective of Action Research, I found Mary Louise Holly's (2009) conceptualisation of written data produced during the research process as being multi-layered, in more ways than one, very helpful for a posthumanist approach too. Holly (2009) describes three different layers of writing, which she categorises as "writing down", "writing up" and "writing about".

The "writing down" stage would fit with my writing in my research diary and lesson plans and observations about what seemed to me at that moment to be happening, particularly in terms of what was said or done by either myself or my pupils. This account could still not be classed as 'factual', because any reporting of an event is through the eyes of one individual, from one physical view point,

Stages	*Timing*	*Purpose*
Writing down	Daily during my fieldwork	To capture as much detail and thick description as possible
Writing up	a) partly during fieldwork as lesson evaluations b) partly at the end of the fieldwork	a) To inform my next teaching steps b) To create case studies and emerging themes
Writing about	Once the previous two stages were completed	To translate my themes into implications for practice. To identify what my own learning has been.

Table 3: Writing stages down/up/about

filtered through their own interests and values, which dictate which aspects of the event they notice, and how they interpret them. However, including the words and observable actions of as many of the participants as possible does go some way towards ensuring that the account is not completely subjective, and lets all participants have a 'voice' to some extent in the account. Holly's (2009) advice at this stage is to use both hemispheres of the brain when deciding what to write down, the left to process factual information and the right to perceive emotions and energy flows. She comments:

> The journal is the place (and space) to make friends with the sensitive, unruly, irascible, irrational, over-excitable, neuronal connections referred to as the limbic system, as well as the systems that observe more slowly and calmly. Leave no brain system behind, including those that want only to record the facts who can be quite helpful capturing details. (Holly, 2009:272)

The next stage of "writing up" happened partly as a part of my planning process, when I wrote in my lesson evaluations and research diary not only what happened but also what I felt and thought about it, and partly afterwards when I began to look back over my writing once I had finished my intervention. This layer could also be considered to include the reflective layer, the thinking about my practice in the process of enacting it, recorded in my research diary and lesson evaluations. This writing during the intervention formed part of the assemblage of my intervention, because this thought process fed into how I planned for my next lesson, both in practical terms of what activities I would do and how, and also in emotional terms, in how I interpreted the relational aspects, and how I responded emotionally to what I perceived to be the

emotions of my pupils, and the flows of affect generated in this process. This process seems very similar to that described by Lenz Taguchi (2009) as pedagogical documentation, in which writing about practice as it happens helps to clarify a practitioner's thoughts, and helps them to make empathetic and thoughtful responses to pupils' learning and emotional needs.

"Writing up" also includes writing both about the story of my intervention and how it developed, and also writing about the individual pupils. Holly (2009) cautions that writing a pen portrait of another also reveals a lot about the writer as well as the subject, for however hard the writer tries to consider the perspectives and realities of their subject(s), their own perspectives are also revealed in what they do or do not choose to highlight. This process of "writing up" helped to identify many of the key ideas in my findings, for example how I made decisions to adapt and personalise learning to meet the needs in my pupils that I had noticed in our lessons, and how these seemed to impact on my pupils, or how agency is distributed beyond the traditional view of myself as the teacher being 'in charge' of learning and behaviour.

Writing up a narrative account for each pupil, in what became my vignettes in Chapter 6, helped to clarify the story of our work together, and what emerged in the process, both in terms of their reading skills, and in any changes to how confident they seem in themselves, as well as mapping flows of affect between us. Writing about the individual pupils helped to identify not only how each one responded uniquely, but also ways in which they were similar, and this also contributed to the development of some of the themes discussed in Chapter 7.

"Writing about" forms the final stage, when Holly (2009) comments that the real adventure begins. This is the point at which the original contribution of research is identified, as the new learning is explored and explained. "Writing up" may not necessarily culminate in a piece of formal writing: it may be a poem, artwork or ethnographic fiction. Holly (2009) wrote that it can also take the form of a self-narrative, which could be described as the 'reflexive' layer. This for me involved focusing on the ways in which I am, to some extent, part of my own data, applying what Grenfell (2019) described as "participant objectivisation", or in other words trying to research myself as a part of the research process. This process involves considering the values, knowledge, and experience as a practitioner that I brought with me into my research

journey. It then went on to explore how these gradually changed as I became more and more absorbed into the world of posthumanist thinking, and the new perspectives it brought to my thinking on education. My old understandings were not erased by the new, but continued alongside, helping to highlight the practical problems of trying to tackle existing dilemmas with new approaches but within the constraints of a conventional setting. The reflexive element also considered how my own experiences of lacking self-confidence has drawn me firstly to working with struggling learners, and then to exploring the links between self-confidence and acquiring literacy skills. It also traces how learning a new way of being as a researcher has boosted my own self-confidence in a mirror image of my pupils' growth of self-confidence as their literacy skills improve, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of immanence, discussed earlier in my Literature Review. As this has happened, my positionality gradually changed, as I became much more critical of many of the ways in which schools in England are required to teach literacy than I was when I began my study.

Agency of the writing process: Another way in which Holly's (2009) writing prompted me to see the writing process as multi-layered was contained in the title of her chapter "Writing to learn: a process for the curious". She described how writing up research for an audience can also reveal new insights for the writer themselves, which resonated with my own experiences of not being able to fully clarify my thinking about something until I began to write about it. It does sometimes feel to me that the writing process has an agency of its own, something produced in an assemblage of keyboard, fingers that know the patterns of words, white pages waiting to be filled, the clunk of the space bar at the end of a word, and ideas that are swirling around, queuing in a disorderly way for their place on the page. While I set out to write about a specific topic, I never know exactly how it will turn out until the writing process has seemed to enact its agency too, not only in terms of choosing words and phrases, but also in terms of aspects like trying to encapsulate some of the more complex ideas into plainer English for my audience, and thus in the process gaining a better understanding of them myself. This process is a dynamic one, as I will usually come back to what I have written the next day, and be able to 'hear' what I have written more clearly, which will then prompt me to rewrite parts again. I have

learnt to hold onto my writing lightly, as it will change and change again after discussions with my supervisors, and more reading. In a way, my writing about my data (by which I mean here my original writing at the time) then itself becomes another layer of data, as I go back and reflect upon the insights I acquired in the writing up processes, forming layers of emerging understanding.

5.1.2. Writing as a method of inquiry

Laurel Richardson (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005) made a case for the process of writing to be considered as a research method in itself. She argued that seeing writing as something that happens once ideas have been fully thought through, and ways in which to present them logically and clearly already decided, belongs to the world of old-fashioned quantitative research methods. So too, she asserted, are binary divisions between “fiction” and “non-fiction” writing as representing what is “made up” and what is “true”. She described language instead as not just “reflecting” social realities, but instead as playing a key part in creating meaning, and social realities, often in the form of competing discourses that are open to interpretation by both the writer and their reader/s, meaning that language can thus be viewed as a “site of exploration and struggle” (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005:1413). She wrote that this understanding of language suggests that all writing is in some part a reflection of the writer’s own internal discourses, emotions and values, which the writer needs to explore in conjunction with their thoughts upon the subject/s they are researching. If this reflexivity is then combined with a post-structuralist rejection of knowledge as something external and immutable waiting to be discovered, then writing can be considered as a way of knowing as it pinpoints the writer’s unique perceptions of a phenomenon in the context they experience it.

Based on this premise, Richardson suggested using what she terms “creative analytical processes” (CAP) in ethnography, asserting that any beliefs that “creative” and “analytical” are opposites are “dinosaurian” and doomed to extinction (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005:1415). If writing is always engaging with intertwined issues of reflexivity, situationality, authority and subjectivity, she asked, why do we need to adhere to representational forms which minimise, rather than explore or even celebrate, these elements? She suggested autoethnography as one possible approach, alongside a range of others, for example poetry, layered texts or stories, and writes that their strength lies in

their potential to crystallise: to reflect external realities and refract them, in ways dependent on the angle of the viewer (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005:1416). In this way, she argued, pieces of writing are both a product, but also producers of knowledge, as they provide fresh perspectives that increase understanding for their readers.

Bettie St Pierre (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005) then added to Richardson's thinking by combining it with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas (see Chapter 3.4) to develop the idea of "nomadic inquiry", in which the research process involves building on expected discoveries or dead ends, seeing them as potential lines of flight rather than problems. She described the rhizomatic (again drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) nature of writing, when, for example, writing about evocative, sensory details from her data triggers emotional responses that in turn trigger connections and deeper understandings that she does not believe she would have made if she had sat down to solely "think", which would have been a much more analytical process. She stated:

> … for me, writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery … (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005:1423) (*italics in original*)

This process seems to me to be illustrated very clearly in O'Grady's (2018) rhizomatic narrative inquiry into the development of identity in young people, in which she drew upon Richardson and St Pierre's (2005) thinking. She described the process of rhizomatic writing as transgressive, because it breaks out of the confines of the traditional linear writing structures, which mirror and reinforce more conventional thinking patterns. This enables new knowledge to be developed: in her study she challenged traditional linear developmental theories of identity construction in young people by using rhizomatic writing to shed light upon ways in which her participants' identities seemed to her to be developed in ways that are less predictable and more unique to individuals. Thus rhizomatic writing methods seemed to have potential as a way to explore the development of reading skills beyond the sequential building of the cognitive components.

These ideas helped to clarify for me my experiences of writing about my research. The process of committing ideas to paper began the process of firming up my fuzzier thinking, but this continued in an iterative process, as I returned to read with fresh eyes what I had written previously, as well as when I

received formal feedback from my supervisors. When I began writing about my time working with the children, I already had some ideas about possible themes, but more developed as I wrote both about the children and about my thinking/reading so far, and then read more literature to explore concepts that were interesting me. This cycle of 'write-read(both my own writing so far and relevant literature)-write' continued for two years as my understanding gradually deepened, and as I mused and then clarified by writing, producing more themes gradually over this period.

5.1.3. Agency of texts

Another idea that seems to throw light upon this process is Randy Schiff's (2014) application of Barad's thinking about entanglement to the role of written texts. Schiff is interested in the different ways in which we read texts, particularly those from very different times and cultures. Rather than seeing texts as inert receptacles of one specific meaning deposited in them, Schiff (2014) positions them as agentic constituents of networks, influencing and being influenced, interacting in different ways with readers who bring their own particular perceptions to them, and acquiring a range of meanings dependent on the context(s) they are read in. Snaza (2019) highlights the links between reading and affect, as physical and emotional states we read about are felt bodily, as well as registered cognitively. This chimed with my experiences re-reading, at a later date, what I had written in my research journal, which allowed me to re-experience the intensities of affect but without the distractions of managing the teaching situation. The writing up process then helped to clarify and map the flows that were perceived in the midst of the busy-ness of teaching, but not thought about in detail at the time. It also provided a space to wonder about my original interpretation of the intensities of affect at the time: to re-read my descriptions of how the pupils acted and spoke, to feel if these descriptions suggest emotions and intentions that maybe at the time I was too immersed in my own emotions to pick up on accurately.

5.1.4. Entanglements of writing and ways of being

Writing a research journal can also have similar outcomes to other sorts of journaling. Committing internal thoughts, emotions and dilemmas to paper has long been used as a way to achieve greater understanding of the writer's own

ways of being in the world, which can then clarify and deepen them, or act as a catalyst to work to change them. Kennedy-Lewis (2012) discussed how self-narrative can be a useful tool particularly for teacher-researchers as a form of memo writing to explore some of the more complex research issues. One example she gave is in thinking about how their presence as a researcher affects the setting they are researching, either in terms of conscious decisions about aspects of the design or implementation of the study, or just their very presence in the situation being observed. Another example is writing about dilemmas in which the researcher is unsure how to balance the requirements of both roles as a teacher and as a researcher, not only to help the researcher to develop a way that works for them in their particular context but also in the process strengthening the validity of the research process by allowing the reader insights into how ethical dilemmas were resolved or issues that may have weakened the research design were tackled, and solutions chosen. Kennedy-Lewis (2012) commented that self-narrative can also help a researcher to become more aware of their own individual ways of seeing the world, and thus become more aware of how that is influencing how they think about both the design of their study and their analysis of the results. In the final section of this chapter, I explore in more detail how I feel that my own ways of being in the world are entangled with my ways of being a researcher.

5.2. Data analysis in the context of posthumanist thinking

As posthumanist thinking focuses on entanglements and assemblages, in which several components come together, sometimes only fleetingly, I decided against using a coding system in which themes and concepts are separated out from within the data and given their own unique code, under which all the relevant items of data are grouped, as it did not seem appropriate for my study. For this reason too, I also decided against using any software qualitative data analysis tools. In this section I describe how I gradually developed my approaches to tackling this challenge.

5.2.1. Making a start with multi-coloured highlighters

I began my data analysis with a more conventional approach of using a colour coding system to identify where in my research diary I had written about each child, and example of which can be found in Appendix F. My diary was, of

course, completed in date order, and I had not worked with all the children every day, or recorded anything particularly significant in every entry. I therefore picked one colour highlighter for each child, and went through my research diary, highlighting anything that I thought could be in any way interesting. This process is based in the more conventional coding practices detailed in Miles and Huberman's (1994) comprehensive guide. In this process, themes are constructed by grouping the data according to ideas or frequently occurring events, each identified by a specific code. The codes are then recorded in a codebook, and the data is read through, with the most pertinent code applied to each item which seems relevant to it. Codes can arise from the research questions and the literature around them, or from heuristic observations that the research wishes to explore further. They can be deductive, derived from themes already identified, and used to confirm or question these pre-existing ideas; or inductive, grouped to together to identify new themes; or hybrid, a mixture of both (Swain, 2018). Traditionally, this process is characterised by strivings for rigour and validity, and continued until "saturation" is achieved, when sufficient data has been identified for the stated research purpose to be fulfilled.

My colour coding system helped me to identify the story of how my time with each child unfolded, and some of the emotions that seemed to unfold in the course of our time together. It also began to pinpoint some events that were illustrative of themes that seemed common across my work with all the children. Some of these themes were ones that I was expecting to see, as my reading had shed light on some aspects that were part of my experience as a practitioner in the past as well as in this study, for example the benefits of having a physical "third space" as well as a conceptual one (Levy, 2008). Other themes seemed to develop gradually as I continued to read through my data, for example the many ways I realised I used to listen to my pupils.

However, this approach did not seem to be helping me with the particular challenges of how to capture some of the more nebulous posthumanist ideas like "flows of affect" (Stewart,2007), or how to illustrate the inter-connectedness of many of the aspects of my study. I therefore began to explore some different approaches that seemed to have more potential to do this.

5.2.2. Moving to reflexive thematic analysis

A key stepping stone to developing my approach was thinking about reflexive thematic analysis, which I found helpful in its shared emphasis on emergence, exploring complexity rather than binary thinking, and the researcher's own entanglement with the analytical process in terms of being very aware of their own subjectivity and philosophical basis. Its emphasis on richness of detail, rather than rigour, and depth of engagement rather than external validity, combined with embracing, rather than avoiding, "messiness", seemed to resonate with my new focus on emotions and reading.

Braun and Clarke (2019)'s reflexive thematic approach was based on their belief that the data does not have, hidden deep within it, some 'truths' that are wanting to be discovered, or even themes that will 'emerge', almost organically, once the analysis process is underway. Instead they wrote that:

> Themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves. (Braun and Clarke, 2019:594)

Because themes are interpretive, characterised by Braun and Clarke as "patterns of shared meaning" (Braun and Clarke, 2019:593), they are often quite complex: instead of being straightforward they can often, instead, be more like "multi-faceted faceted crystals" (Braun and Clarke, 2019:8) with a core "essence" expressed in different ways. Reflexive thematic analysis is a much more fluid, less structured approach. It involves codes evolving in a reiterative process of initial coding, analysis, re-coding, thematic development, analysis, and rethinking coding again. This means that there is no inherent end point, but that the researcher has to make their own judgement call on when to stop analysis and begin writing (often because of time issues).

While this approach was very helpful in expanding the possibilities of coding for me, it still seemed too human-centred for a posthumanist consideration of my study, which would require my agency as researcher to be considered as just one of several agentic entities in the research event. I found two approaches that seemed to shed light on this process: that of Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), and also Fox and Alldred (2017).

5.2.3. Intra-acting with the data

I found Hultman and Lenz Taguchi's (2010) consideration of data analysis in the light of Deleuze's (1988) concepts of nomadic thinking very interesting, particularly their idea of thought as something that almost happens to us, when different forces in the world come together and impact upon us, rather than something we "do". Deleuze (1988:19) wrote that thinking was more "the effect of a body on our body, the effect of an idea on our idea", and as such can be viewed as existing as part of networks and assemblages, rather than happening in isolation inside a person's brain. This suggests that the concept of reflexivity needs adjusting, as it involves the researcher aspiring to look at themselves, as well as their research subjects, with as much objectivity as is possible in that situation, which implies attempting to remove the thinker from the assemblage that they are thinking within. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) prefer Latour's (1988) term "infra-reflection", which opens up a space for the researcher to consider their own entanglement within the events they are thinking about. Although it there is a danger that this model of thinking seems rather passive, underplaying the individual's ability to evaluate and synthesise different aspects of their thinking, it does avoid the closed thinking habits than can turn a researcher into what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described as an "over-coded-machine". Thinking in an over-coded way involves developing one theory to explain or illustrate a problem, or to highlight a new insight, and then concentrating on the data that fits in with this particular model of thinking, and ignoring or downplaying data that does not. This is especially tempting when there is a strong emotional attachment to the research outcome, either personal or moral.

A more intra-active approach is the process of "becoming with" the data: concentrating on the flows of affective intensities that we experience when immersed in our data. Hultman and Taguchi (2010) employed the term "bodymind", which they borrowed from Floyd Merrell (2003), to be aware of our own affective responses, and how knowing happens in physical and emotional responses as well as language based discursive responses. "Becoming with" data also acknowledges that we as researchers are also changed by the processes of thinking about the data, as our perspectives and knowledge grows. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) bring this back to Barad's (2007)

ideas of onto-epistemology, that we can only understand the world as part of it, and cannot claim any rights to be able to definitively understand, categorise or organise it. They write that what a researcher can do is to be attentive to what enchants or moves the children we are observing, and to what is emerging, particularly in terms of potentials for the future.

This style of research seems suited to my study because it strongly positions children as constantly emerging individuals, entangled in intra-actions with peers, adults and matter. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) commented that this means that the debate about whether children are seen as incomplete and lacking, with education as the remedy for this, or arriving in school already strong and agentic, is not relevant, because Deleuzian thought views both humans and matter as all constantly in a shared process of immanence, but with their own unique style of becoming. Nomadic thinking explores what emerges as all the components of an assemblage encounter each other, and what happens in the spaces in-between, which is where posthumanist interpretations of education position learning experiences as taking place. The emphasis on emergence seemed very appropriate for my study because it not only shines a light on a child's emerging reading skills, rather than on their 'lack' in struggling with learning to read, but also on their emergence as a whole person, including their self-confidence.

5.2.4. Exploring assemblages and flows of affect

Although Fox and Alldred (2017) wrote about very different contexts to mine, as they are both sociologists, this difference did in fact prove useful, as their application of new materialist theories to topics such as aging or health prompted me to look at the assemblages of my intervention in a slightly broader way, and with fresh perspectives. I found their discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) thinking about assemblages and affect particularly helpful, especially the emphasis on the unpredictability and transience of assemblages, in terms of how they come together, and what they may produce. Fox and Alldred (2017) wrote that assemblages are held together by "the capacities of assembled relations to affect or be affected" and they describe this capacity as an "affect" or a "becoming", which can be characterised as "a force that achieves some change of state or capabilities in a relation" (Fox and Alldred, 2017:18). Although the flows of affect in a particular assemblage may only

make a small change, when many similar ones happen together, they contribute to the unfolding of lives, societies or even history.

Emotions were identified by Fox and Alldred (2017) as key generators of flows of affects within assemblages. Internal emotions within one person can affect a wide range of elements in an assemblage, including bodies (for example stress causing muscle tension), other people's emotions (someone feeling upset to witness another's distress), or actions. These reactions are likely to generate changes, in the form of new emotions and further actions, continuing until the assemblage dissipates. The concept of looking to see what emotions *do* in our teaching and learning assemblages contributed to my writing of the vignettes, by exploring the different emotions that seemed to be experienced by each individual learner, and how these intra-acted with the resources, the cognitive elements of our literacy learning, and also with me and my own emotions, in affective flows of intensities. It also contributed to the unfolding of my developing themes, by looking across the reactions of all five children, to see if there were patterns of emotions *doing* similar things in similar learning assemblages.

A further way in which Fox and Alldred (2017)'s thinking influenced my own was their consideration of what they described as the "research assemblage", based on new materialist ideas. They believe that the whole of the research assemblage should become the focus of analysis, including the researcher, the researched (both human and more-than-human), the tools used to carry out the research, and ideas, emotions and different values. The analytical process includes exploring the relations between all these elements, and the new possibilities generated by the relations, the "micro-politics" of where power lies in these relations, the flows of affect, and how the research assemblage has the capacity to "aggregate", to find things or ideas in common, or to "specify" and point out what may be unique and special about who or what is being studied (Fox and Alldred, 2017:171). They advocated describing assemblages in terms of both the "micro" and "macro" elements involved, as well as the flows of affect, and ideas and emotions, alongside humans, and material objects, in a way that seems very useful to adapt for my study. One example of this is the simple assemblage of a minor infection like the common cold:

"respiratory tract – virus – immune system – inflammation"

(Fox and Alldred, 2017:134)

which they expand to include relations formed beyond the body of the person with the cold, for example colleagues who catch it from them, or duties that they are unable to fulfil because of feeling unwell:

> "respiratory tract – virus – immune system – inflammation – pharmacist – pharmaceutical compound – theories of infection and inflammation – daily responsibilities – family members – social networks"
>
> (Fox and Alldred, 2017:135)

Using this model would enable me to describe my work with each child in terms of a research assemblage, whose general framework could be seen to consist of:

> pupil – me – structured literacy intervention – teaching resources – small office – pupil's past experiences with literacy learning – pupil's home literacies and parental support – school reading achievement expectations – my past experiences with literacy support teaching – my research journal – theories of teaching and learning – class teacher – posthumanist thought

This is not in any particular order, nor is it an exhaustive list, and some additional elements may need to be added for the specific experiences with individual pupils. However, it provided a framework for me to think about the relations between these different elements of the assemblage for each individual child, their relations to each other, and the flows of affect between them. This framework formed the basis of my vignettes for each of the children, including the roles of resources, flows of affect and internal emotions, as well as how the human participants intra-acted with the cognitive aspects of the reading intervention.

5.2.5. Analysing the agentic role of matter

Analysing the agentic role of matter is very specific to posthumanist research approaches. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) wrote that this requires moving away from the assumption that humans occupy a higher position than matter when analysing data. In order to do this, a researcher is required to challenge their habits of seeing, their own individual perceptual style: Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) drew on Barad's (2007) thinking that seeing involves more than just passive gazing, but is instead a learnt process that varies according to the practice that it is part of. They noticed in their own data analysis that they used

a strongly anthropocentric gaze, their eyes automatically being drawn to any human figures in images, and that they registered far less information about any material objects. To counteract this tendency, they advocate working to flatten the hierarchy so that matter is not viewed as inferior in its contribution to that of humans in learning situations, but is read side by side instead. They developed the term “relational materialism” to use within educational research, to describe the consideration of a child acting in relationship with the material world around them, as well as with other humans.

This also seemed in tune with my reading of Pacini-Ketchabaw et.al.’s (2017) work, which I have discussed in Chapter 3.3.3. They ask two questions that really prompted my thinking about my own data:

> What if materials shape us as much as we shape them? What if we pay attention to the effects of things and to how things move together, not asking what an object or a thing or a material *is*, but what does a material *do*? (Pacini-Ketchabaw et.al (2017:4). (*Italics in original)*

Pacini-Ketchabaw et.al. (2017) explored how the different materials in an early years setting “speak back” to the children, for example paper’s tendency to flutter and fly in a breeze, or paint’s tendency to drip and merge, and thus to blur boundaries. This prompted me to explore not only how I used material resources, but then what did these resources *do*, in terms of how their material properties influenced the unfolding of my intervention with each different child. This call to consider the more-than-human on equal terms to the human in learning assemblages, again not just as an afterthought, is integral to my study, as the material resources seem to be important in the emotional and affective responses of children in learning to read.

5.3. Deciding how to use my data analysis to answer my research questions

In this section, I describe how I developed two main strategies to explore my data in order to answer my research questions. My research questions were:

RQ1: What are the implicit, “more than cognitive”, strategies and skills that I employ as a reading support practitioner alongside the explicit cognitive elements of my teaching programme?

RQ2: What are the emotions that seem to be experienced by pupils who are finding acquiring early reading skills particularly difficult, and how do they change as they are supported in developing these skills?

Each of these questions seemed to need answering in a slightly different way, using different aspects of my theoretical framework. When considering how to explore the emotions of my pupils, I was very aware that no-one can know what another person's internal emotions are, but it is possible to observe the external embodiment of them, in how they are performed, and also to sense them by their impact on the observer, in the form of affect. I therefore needed to develop a way to analyse affect in the context of this particular thesis.

5.3.1. Using "moments of muchness" to analyse affect

A key aspect of my study involved using affect theory to explore emotions around learning to read, especially when children find it difficult, and supporting such early readers. However, identifying a method by which to collect and analyse data about emotions and flows of affect was not straightforward. I can only really write accurately about my own emotions, and I can only describe what I can see, and the affective forces I can feel, of my pupils' emotions. Kathleen Stewart (2007), whose work on affect theory I have described in my previous chapter, wrote about the complexity of writing about affect:

> At once abstract and concrete, ordinary affects are more directly compelling than ideologies, as well as more fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable than symbolic meanings. (Stewart, 2007:3).

She added that this makes them very difficult to lay out "on a single, static plain of analysis", or fit into a triangle of subject, concept and world (Stewart, 2007:3). Stewart wrote that affect is identified when people are caught up in "something that feels like something" (Stewart, 2007:2), and moments of strong flows of intensities like these are often characteristic of significant points in 1:1 teaching.

It was easy to identify the moments of greatest affective intensity informally because they were the moments that remained very clear in my memory, as the affective intensities had kept details very sharp for me, which is significant because I generally have quite a poor memory (much to the delight of my pupils in memory games). When I began to think about these moments in the context of our work together, these moments were always ones when learning shifted,

either taking a new direction or an added intensity, and ones in which I also learned something new, either in terms of my teaching practice or my thinking for this thesis. However, it was harder to think about a more structured way to analyse them.

Over the course of my reading, I felt drawn to the phrase “moments of muchness” (Thiel, 2018) as a way to identify these sorts of key points in my data, because it focuses on the level of intensity that makes them significant, but does not attempt to label or judge. Instead, it opens up a space to experience fully and explore in more detail. Jaye Thiel has a particular interest in increasing educational equity, and began her academic writing about “muchness” in her doctoral thesis, expanding on it in a chapter in a book about play and art in early years’ education. She wrote that her concept of “muchness” has its roots partly in her Southern working class background, but also partly in Tim Burton’s film of Alice in Wonderland: there is one point in Lewis Carroll’s original version of the story where the Dormouse asks Alice if she can draw “muchness”. Thiel (2018) described muchness as “an affective moment of intellectual and creative fullness that pulsates between bodies, space, objects, and discourse” (Thiel, 2018:27). As they are based in affect, she writes, these moments are felt as well as seen, as forces or flows of liveliness, and can as easily be moments of frustration or confusion as moments of enjoyment or success. Muchness takes the form of bursts of energy, and happens within assemblages of humans, more-than-humans, and space and time. Thiel summed up: “Muchness is a force that makes someone or something stick with and come back for more, despite obstacles” (Thiel, 2018:28).

In their discussion of Thiel’s concept of “muchness”, Spector and Kidd (2019) drew parallels with Kimmerer’s (2013) thoughts on “puhpowee”, which is the word in the Potowatomi language for the force that causes mushrooms to appear suddenly from the earth overnight, and for which there is no direct English translation. Kimmerer saw this word as being helpful in describing the force of emergence: “full of unseen energies that animate everything” (Kimmerer 2013:49), which resonates with Deleuze’s writing about rhizomatic growth (discussed earlier in my literature chapter), in which underground rhizomes send up shoots that suddenly appear, with no visible surface links. Spector and Kidd (2019) extended the use of “muchness” to be the potential

pent up inside connections, waiting to be suddenly released by being acknowledged. They wrote that: “Muchness is the way the world presents itself, but somehow along the way, we humans have been trained to unsee it” (Spector and Kidd, 2019:65). However, muchness is still likely to be felt, if not seen, and as such is often what imprints an event in our memories, illustrated by Spector’s account of one such moment from her childhood, which was filled with wonder, and still seems crystal clear to her nearly forty years later.

Looking back over my practice before my fieldwork, I could see how “moments of muchness” (Thiel, 2018) had always been significant parts of my reading support work: intensities from the school day that pop unprompted into your mind like little video clips, sometimes later in the day, sometimes years later. These moments seemed to me to resonate with Donna Haraway’s (2016) phrase “staying with the trouble”: she wrote about events that may require us to either settle troubled waters, or stir up trouble to provoke a response, but that both require us to learn to be very present in the moment. The concept of “muchness”, as described by Thiel (2018), has proved very helpful in my analysis of affect by helping me to pinpoint particular events within the stories of my time working with each child, which illustrate strong affective flows, of different natures. As I wrote about them, I began to realise that they were the moments that became vignettes, in a process of narrative immanence, and which seemed, among them, to illustrate all the themes that were emerging from my data.

5.3.2. Mapping flows of affect

Another aspect of my analysis of affect was exploring mapping the flows of affect within my “moments of muchness”. Christian Ehret (2018) wrote about his work tutoring a teenage boy in hospital, and especially about affect manifesting in different ways, and with different textures; sometimes energising, sometimes draining. He also wrote about feeling affect bodily, as well as consciously thinking about it as a researcher, especially when it was most intense and layered, focusing on internal emotions too strong to express adequately in words, as the family support their son through treatment for leukaemia. Mapping the flows of affect involves not only describing what I felt myself, and what it appeared to me my pupils were feeling, but also what the flows of affect seemed to be doing within the teaching situation.

However, Stewart had also written that affect is identified when people are caught up in and concept of moments of strong flows of intensities like these resonated with points that had often seemed significant when I had been teaching 1:1.

5.3.3. Using Baroque Technique to create "vignettes-in-context"

Vignettes usually take the form of short descriptions (often from about fifty words to a few hundred) of an event, which Skilling and Styliandes (2019) liken to an incomplete short story. The description is often "thick", with vivid detail of elements like settings, body language, emotions or physical responses, as vignettes are often focused on events that are nuanced or multi-layered (Skilling and Styliandes, 2019). Vignettes seemed appropriate in this study because of their potential to illustrate moments in detail, and to try to deepen the understanding of participants' responses, in a way that is in keeping with posthumanist thinking. This potential of vignettes to explore a subject in depth is illustrated in a study by Philippa Hunter (2012) of problematized history pedagogy in New Zealand. Hunter teaches history in a secondary school, in an area her family have lived in for generations. Local archives illustrated how her ancestors arrived as colonising migrants over a century and a half ago, and Hunter (2012) used vignettes to illustrate, and to explore more deeply, her emotions about the role her ancestors played this contentious part in New Zealand's history, and how this impacted on her teaching of this era.

Another study in a similar vein is that by Blodgett and colleagues (2011), which explored how vignettes could be used as a way to work with indigenous people in participant research in Canada, to represent their voices and experiences in a way that formed a bridge between the two cultures of academic and Wikwemikong traditions, particularly building on story telling as a way of learning. Blodgett et al. (2011) identified three main ways they could have used vignettes in this context: to paint portraits of individuals' characters and experiences; to illustrate a "snapshot" of a specific event or incident; or a composite, putting together fragments to make a cohesive whole. They opted for portraits, but snapshots of moments that felt significant seemed more apt for my study. Blodgett et al. (2011) worked closely with their indigenous co-researchers to produce each vignette, ensuring that the person portrayed had the final say in its production. They wrote that they felt that vignettes provided a

very effective way for the voices of marginalised individuals to be heard in mainstream spaces. As the children I worked with were quite young, I did not find that asking them directly about their feelings elicited much detailed information, whereas describing their actions and body language seemed to generate more. I feel that this still formed an important part of enabling their voices to be heard, in that it was shining a light on what emotions might be felt when experiencing difficulties with literacy skills at such a young age, and also what it might feel like to be in receipt of reading support interventions. With hindsight, it would have been very useful to have been able to arrange to talk to my pupils about their perceptions looking back at the events I wrote about, to see what their memories and perspectives about them were, and explore how similar or dissimilar they were to mine.

My original plan had been to use case studies to tell the story of my time with each child, to explore how it unfolded, and what seemed to happen as a consequence, in terms of both their reading skills, and their confidence in themselves. This still seemed to remain very important in my new posthumanist approach, as it enabled an exploration of emergences and becomings. On the other hand, however, a too linear account would fall into the 'cause and effect' thinking that I was trying to move beyond in my new theoretical framework. I therefore decided to create a mixture of a narrative of our time together, with particular points highlighted as vignettes, made richer by having the addition of the context they occurred in, which I feel can be best termed as "vignettes-in-context". The rich detail of a vignette seemed an ideal way to explore all the different elements that came together to make "something that feels like something" (Stewart, 2007:2), and I found Burnett and Merchant's (2016) writing about using "Baroque Technique" very helpful in thinking about this richness of detail. They described the Baroque period in the history of art as a reaction against the very rational and restrained ethos of the Reformation, characterised by splendour, theatricality, ornate and opulent detail, and blurring of scale and boundaries. They applied this to the world of literacy studies in terms of rejecting the pared down "simple view of literacy" (Gough and Tumner, 1986) as denying the messiness, joy and spontaneity which often lies at the root of experiences which are both engaging and situated in real life literacy events. This helped me to feel comfortable with including rich detail, the dead ends and

disasters, as well as the successes in my teaching, and the full intensities of the affective flows. Burnett and Merchant (2016) comment that considering elements like playfulness and multimodality is also an important aspect of the "Baroque Technique" in writing about literacy, again very apt for my study.

5.3.5. Intertwining vignettes and moments of muchness

Vignettes seemed to work well in conjunction with "moments of muchness" as a way to analyse my data. Several events during my fieldwork seemed to be etched very clearly in my memory, and I can still see and feel lots of detail very clearly, which is quite unusual for me. When I looked back over my writing about each child and my work with them, these events seemed not only to be important points in the narrative of my time working with them, but also to pinpoint and encapsulated key traits or themes in my work with them. This fits with Richardson's (2005) thoughts about writing crystallizing thought, as writing each vignette helped to crystallise what seemed most significant to me. Writing these "moments of muchness" (Thiel, 2018) as vignettes, with as much detail in all aspects as possible, including affective flows and emotions, really helped me to think more deeply about them, and to think whether there might be other possible perspectives or interpretations. This process also helped me to explore my own reflexivity, to think about what prompted my decision-making in the moment, and again to wonder whether, with hindsight, I might have made different decisions.

5.3.6. Using "Stacking stories"

Burnett and Merchant (2017) use the term "stacking stories" to describe how using narrative accounts of the same event, but written from different participants' viewpoints, can give a much rounder, and more triangulated, perspective. Although each child's experience of the intervention was of course unique, I was also exploring my own experiences in supporting their learning, which was common to all the accounts. The term "stacking stories" seemed very apt as a way to explore how I used the same techniques and approaches, but in different ways according to individual needs and preferences, with the structured programme running through the core, supporting the stability of the stacking process. Each of the children also had some similar experiences of struggling to learn to read, but each child had a different emotional reaction to

these, and as a consequence interacted differently with both myself and the literacy activities. “Stacking” the children’s stories, including both the case study and embedded vignette elements, enabled me to both see common threads in their experiences, and also to explore how these experiences were very different, illustrating how learning to read at a slower pace than expected can be supported in such a way that confidence not only emerges undented, but can also potentially even be boosted.

5.3.7. Deciding on what to include or exclude

I then considered how the stories of all the children would fit together. In both the years of my fieldwork, there was one more pupil that I worked with, and had permission to include, but whose story did not seem to add anything more than that which was already illustrated more vividly in my accounts of other children. I therefore decided not to include their stories in this thesis, although insights that I have gained while working with them will be there as a part of my writing.

5.4. Exploring my own entanglement with my research

Over the course of my study I have gradually become more aware of, and then began to explore in more depth, the assumptions I make particularly from my lifetime’s experience of being involved in education as a learner, parent, teacher, teaching assistant and assistant SENDCo. Although posthumanist thinking replaces the concept of reflexivity with the more ‘entangled’ ideas like ‘intra-action with’ or ‘becoming with’ the data, it still seems import to acknowledge what Grenfell described as “the way that a person’s thoughts or ideas – including the values they carry – become embedded in what they do and know” (Grenfell 2019:19). This sits well with Barad’s (2007) thinking about onto-epistemology, wherein she posits that knowing can never be separated from being, because cognition is always entangled with emotions, relationships and experiences. As I reflected on my own positionality, I began to see how several aspects of my own ways of being were reflected in my thinking throughout my study.

5.4.1. “gGillian”: perspectives from my childhood

“gGillian” began as a typing error by my supervisor, but it seemed to me to capture the fact that “little Gillian”, or my memories of myself as a child,

particularly when I was at school, are always a part of “big Gillian”, my adult self as a teacher/researcher. I think that remembering my experiences as a child seems to impact upon this thesis in two main ways.

The first is that while I cannot make any claim to know how children feel in different situations, I can remember how I felt when I was their age, and how this is similar or different from my present reality. What seems remarkable to me is how unchanging many aspects of myself are, even over six decades. My likes and dislikes are pretty much the same, just changing slightly in contexts, and my emotional responses seem very similar: I am still a worrier, still quite methodical and cautious. This reminds me of the importance of the similarities between adults and children, and how we are all people first and foremost. However, I think the biggest change is in how much I just accepted what I was told when I was a child, and how much influence adults had over my life, and this makes me think very carefully how I talk to children, as I know from my own experiences what a huge boost a few words of recognition or encouragement make, and how devastating criticism or lack of understanding can be. I also try to keep in mind these similarities and differences when I analyse my data, that my own responses and the children’s may be different, but are of equal worth.

The second is how my own struggles with self-esteem as a child, continuing to the present, help me to understand, and want to advocate for, children experiencing similar feelings. As a child, I was very unconfident: I was chubby, untidy and shy, and generally a disappointment to my Dad. I spent the majority of my primary school years sitting on a ‘middle table’, steadily working my way through ‘middle table’ work, trying first and foremost to be ‘good’. Nobody ever suggested I should sit anywhere else, so it never occurred to me to question my place. I remember very clearly, one day when I was about ten, being called up to the teacher’s table. Mrs Handel asked me if I would like to try ‘top table’ work, and I remember first being surprised to be asked, then even more surprised that I could do it. My Mum enjoyed reading, and I remember from being quite small going to the local library as a family, and coming home with a haul of new books, to be taken upstairs and devoured in my room, which I think had helped my learning perhaps more than anyone realised before this point. I was then given a ‘promotion’ to the ‘top table’, then to sitting an examination for a fee-paid place at a private school, which I passed, and thus consequentially to

becoming one of the ten per cent who at that time went on to University. Mrs Handel had opened a door for me to a whole new world that was beyond the working class aspirations of my parents, and therefore myself at the time, but had also given me a template for a teacher who can see potential within a child and have the skills to enable and to inspire them to realise their full potential. I had experienced for myself the transformational possibilities of teaching. It has also been a pleasant surprise to realise that a lifetime of overthinking has turned out to be a very useful habit for a PhD, with its requirements to consider a subject from every possible angle.

5.4.2. "Mrs Smith": perspectives as a practitioner

When I began this study, I was working with a very cognitively based conception of reading support. I had been very aware that I used confidence-building strategies, rapport and fun alongside the cognitive aspects of my interventions, but I had not been able to pinpoint exactly how I worked out how to do this for each pupil, apart from using my 'teacher's intuition'. I had explored more psychology-based approaches, for example producing a booklet for older primary pupils (ages 9 to 11) on developing their resilience skills, but it had not seemed to be particularly helpful.

At the end of the first year of my fieldwork, the feedback from the class teacher was that the significance of my intervention for her was the children's self-confidence increasing "tenfold", for while their reading had improved considerably, it was not enough to take them out of the school "below expected" attainment parameters. The prospect of pursuing a line of enquiry into the relationship between self-confidence and reading skills really interested me, but was also quite daunting. When I began to look in the more conventional literature, there seemed to be studies about how weak reading skills knocked pupils' self-confidence, but there was very little on how to reverse this process, beyond it following on naturally after increased reading accuracy.

I then began a different journey, looking at learning to read in a much broader way, as I described Chapter 3. I began to question my ways of being as a teacher, as I realised how much I had been unconsciously working within the deficit model, even though I was very aware of the mismatch between their needs and the available provision, and also how much I had taken many of the

school discourses for granted, and accepted “schooled” (Street, 1993) framings of literacies as the only model. I really began to experience the “duelling identities” (McLean, 2019) of researcher and teacher, as I began to research myself as a practitioner alongside the pupils I was teaching, and started to critique many of the assumptions about the education system that I had accepted before without question. This unsettled my sense of identity a lot, as it took a while to develop a new picture in my head of my identity as a bridge between the two worlds, drawing in new ideas and perspectives from my new theoretical worlds, but using my experience from the reality of having been a teacher within the confines of the current educational system, to know how to translate them into ideas that practitioners could in turn draw upon. Intellectually I felt more and more at home in the posthumanist world, but emotionally I still felt very much a teacher, especially as I was spending a lot of time in school still doing my fieldwork. Gradually this began to feel more comfortable, as I realised the benefits of being able to combine these two perspectives in a unique way.

Chapter 6. Listening to my readers: thinking about my data

In this chapter I will explore my work with my pupils, using vignettes, and Burnett and Merchant's (2017, 2016) thinking on "stacking stories" and "Baroque technique", as described in the previous chapter. To do this, I draw on my research diary, written daily as I carried out my literacy intervention, and the lesson plans that informed my delivery of the intervention, and which I evaluated against the aims in my teaching plans. The focus of my exploration will be to shed light on my research questions:

RQ1: What are the implicit, "more than cognitive", strategies and skills that I employ as a reading support practitioner alongside the explicit cognitive elements of my teaching programme?

RQ2: What are the emotions that seem to be experienced by pupils who are finding acquiring early reading skills particularly difficult, and how do they change as they are supported in developing these skills?

I will begin with the two pupils I decided to write about from Year 1 of my fieldwork (2017-8), who I have called "Ben" and "Vinnie". I will then write about three pupils from Year 2 of my fieldwork (2018-9), who I have called "Rose", "Emily" and "Alicia". To conclude this chapter, I will consider how my work with these literacy learners has helped me to answer my research questions.

6.1. Vignette: Ben - "I don't like reading and I'm no good at it".

I worked with Ben as part of Year 1 of my fieldwork, from 11th September 2017 until 10th May 2018. We had three twenty minute sessions a week, at times when the rest of his class were doing similar activities, for instance group reading activities, to fulfil the terms of my ethics approval that my pupils' learning, or opportunities for experiences in school, would not be impacted negatively by taking part in my study. Ben was six years old when we began our work together, and he was suggested as a participant by Sue, his class teacher, because she was concerned he seemed to be struggling with academic work across the curriculum. Sue taught a mixed class of two year groups, the older group being the same age as Ben, and the other half in the year below, and Ben was needing additional support to tackle the activities aimed primarily at those a year younger than him. Ben's reading skills were causing particular

concern, as he had not yet mastered how to blend letter sounds together in order to read whole words. I discovered later on, in a staffroom conversation recorded in my journal on 18th January 2018 with the T.A. who had worked with him in the previous year, that Ben had been reluctant to engage in reading support, and so had made very little progress.

However, in the playground Ben was one of the "cool kids", playing with pupils who earned themselves social status by being daring about pushing boundaries, and holding his own socially very confidently. His hair was always immaculately gelled into a quiff, and he was always dressed very smartly and fashionably. He was one of the children that other children wanted to play with. In contrast to the classroom, he was, both at home and in the playground, positioned both by others and by himself, as someone whose company was sought, and who expected to make choices about who he spent time with and what he would do.

Ben begun his work with me by declaring firmly in our very first session on 11th September 2017: "I don't like reading and I'm no good at it". Ben was at this point very much in what Truman et al. (2020) describe as a "position of no", not only about literacy activities but most of the school's formal curriculum. Truman et al. (2020) describe the possibilities afforded by pupils saying "no" in the classroom as "capacious" because they can create spaces for new alternatives to be explored. They write: "No is an affective moment. It can signal a pushback, an absence, or a silence" (Truman et al. 2020:1), and this emphasis on affect underscores the importance of taking Ben's "no" as an indication of his feelings of distress, and the lack of fit between his current position and his literacy needs, rather than as a behavioural issue about non-compliance. My work with Ben as a consequence was characterised by two main aspects. One was the strong flows of affect: sometimes these were positive, but at other times quite negative, and they could change quickly in ways that I did not always understand. The other aspect was my struggle to find activities that would win Ben round from his "no", while still helping him to develop his reading skills to close the gap with his peers as quickly as possible.

6.1.1. Working with Ben's "no"

As my original aim was to deliver the structured literacy teaching programme I had been trained to deliver as a specialist dyslexia teacher to children with a wider profile of difficulties, I began by following the classic lesson plan with Ben. As I only had shorter slots instead of a whole hour (dyslexia specialist support provision was usually two one hour sessions a week), I had to adapt this to deliver one plan in two or three smaller chunks. An example of a typical lessons is given in Appendix C. I based my lessons on the Individual Learning Plan, again illustrated in Appendix D, based on the reading and language skills profiling that I carried out before beginning my reading support intervention.

Even though this way of teaching has evolved specifically to work with pupils who experienced similar difficulties as Ben, it quickly became obvious that I would have to adapt it specifically for him: I noted in my very first lesson evaluation on 17th October 2017 that I would "*need more, shorter activities next time*". I tried to make the lessons interesting, for example I brought objects in from home to play "Kim's Game" for our memory activity (an array of objects are set out for a few minutes, then one is secretly removed and hidden, and has to be identified correctly by the guesser, who then has the next turn to choose and hide an object). I recorded in my lesson plan for 19th October 2017 that Ben had not been able to remember any of the objects which had been hidden, which was unusual in my experience of working with children facing similar difficulties.

However, by 30th October 2017, I noted in my research journal that Ben was *"much improved in Kim's game*", just from a few sessions practice, as it had been half term during this interval too. These activities seemed to be giving him a space in which to develop his own strategies and consequently his faith in himself as a learner, and he began to make some progress. By 3rd November 2017, we had moved onto a more formal memory activity, in which I showed Ben some random letters for a minute or so, before turning the paper face down, and asking him to write them on his whiteboard. On 8th November 2017, I recorded that Ben was *"very pleased with himself*" because he had met his target of four letters. On the same day, I told him that his teacher and T.A. had both said to me how pleased they were with his reading now, and I recorded that he had looked *"really happy",* and read without complaining that day.

Even though we had some very positive lessons like that of 8th November 2017, when Ben could see his own progress, and get positive feedback from others, he still needed lots of encouragement to attempt our literacy activities, and often complained that they were boring. Lots of different activities seemed to appeal to him for a couple of days, then he would declare that he was bored of them, and I would need to find something else. I used every single idea I had developed over nearly two decades of support teaching, ran out, and had to develop some more. As Ben said on 10th November 2017 that he liked colouring in but not reading, I tried printing the high frequency words we were learning in a large hollow font so that he could colour them in, which he enjoyed as a part of our lessons for a while. We started to make his own personal reading book about his friend from down his road on 23rd November 2017, as he had seemed keen on the idea of making his own book to read on this topic, but we only got half way through and never finished it. On 28th November 2017, I tried using the interactive spelling and reading software "Wordshark", because I knew that he enjoyed computer games at home and it would link into this interest (Marsh, 2010) but while he was really keen on for a couple of goes, he quickly lost interest again.

I found that Ben worked best when presented with several short literacy skills activities even in just a twenty minute session, and from 30th November 2017 I began using a tick list with Ben so that he could see what he had to do, and what was completed. This seemed to reassure him that he did not have unmanageable amounts of work to do in a lesson.

I made 'lotto' games and 'pairs' games to focus on particular learning objectives, and also made some little paper books using vocabulary I wanted him to learn. The school mainly used the Oxford Reading Tree scheme, which featured a lot of longer or irregular words that needed context to work out, and Ben had already taken the early books home several times each. Making little books was very labour-intensive, and probably only practical in quite a limited number of school situations. A big advantage, however, of making my own books was that they did not have a coloured band on them that clearly signalled to everyone else how well your reading skills are or are not developing. The school staff never explicitly drew attention to this, but I overheard another pupil say to Ben "are you only on ….? I am on ……!" even though this was just one

band above Ben's. I tried as hard as I could to make Ben's learning as interactive, multi-modal and relevant to his interests as possible, but it felt like every step was an uphill struggle.

Ben's tick list for ……..(date)

		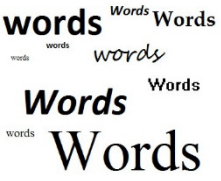	
			
			

Figure 1: Ben's tick list

Two incidents in particular in class stuck in my mind. On 21st November 2017 I recorded in my research diary that Ben had been adamant in the class Maths lesson that he did not want to use the practical apparatus with the rest of his group to work out answers, and so had guessed, but incorrectly, as he was unsure of the underlying concepts. A few days previously, on 13th November 207, I recorded that he had refused my help in the maths lesson, preferring to work independently even though he ended up with not one single correct answer. At the time, it was hard not to feel that *I* was being rejected, especially as he was also continuing to be very reluctant to engage with all the different activities I was trying, to make our lessons enjoyable for him. An alternative explanation, on the other hand, is to consider whether Ben was instead rejecting elements, both human and more-than-human, that positioned him as a "struggling learner" in class. Lenz Taguchi (2010) writes about the power of objects to "say" a lot about who you are or, sometimes more accurately, how

you perform who you are. In vignettes from her own life, Lenz Taguchi illustrates this, for example the power of the "dot" she was required to sit on as a young child, or the authority of the large wooden chair she sat on in the Vice-Chancellor's room at Stockholm University. Working out answers independently in your head indicated a confident, capable mathematician in class; using apparatus and accepting adult help could be seen as indicating the opposite. In our lessons, he would say that he did not want to read because it was boring and he did not like it, which positioned him again as an independent person making his own choices, rather than someone struggling and in need of help.

However, the activities I was managing to persuade him to do seemed to be helping him in his school phonics group: I noted on 15th November 2017 that he returned from that day's phonics with "2 glittery stars" for his confidence in decoding his consonant-vowel-consonant words, which he had not been able to do at the beginning of term. The T.A. who taught his phonics group told me on 4th December 2017 that he seemed to be enjoying his phonics sessions, and she thought that is was because he was now one of the most confident in the group, and she was able to give him a lot of praise. The link between reluctance to attempt literacy activities and the expectation of success was illustrated in my research journal on 11th December 2017, when he read the first of the "Benchmarking" reading assessment texts. I wrote that he had "moaned and groaned" at the prospect of having to do it, but once persuaded, had read it with 100% accuracy, and then was "really quite over the moon" with his achievement and went happily back to class to tell Sue (his class teacher) all about it. On the 13th December 2017, a day or two before the Christmas break, I recorded the following in my research journal:

13th December 2017: "Just went in to read today. Sue asked me who I wanted and Ben's hand shot up to be first with a huge smile – I felt I had been given the best Christmas present ever! I asked him if he liked reading more now that he was getting so confident with it and he said yes. I asked: a little more or a lot more and he said a lot!"

6.1.2. The "caring warrior" battles on….

It would at this point have been wonderful to be able to claim that I had 'fixed' Ben, and from that point forward, his relationship with reading, and with me, had

become transformed. However, the reality was more complex than this, as illustrated by this excerpt from my research diary not long after the beginning of the new term:

16th January 2018: My "helping" in maths didn't go well today – I am convinced Ben can actually do the lesson content but is far too unfocused to give it a good try. Talked to (the class teacher) at playtime and said I would like to have a chat with him about how I might be able to help him with this, in our intervention slot. After play, Ben refused to come with me – I think because he knew I hadn't been happy with him in maths. Sue (his class teacher) intervened to persuade him to go with me, and Ben burst into tears! I was mortified – I have never had a child cry before because they did not want to work with me! Decided to go home for lunch and come back later for (another pupil) and Ben went off for phonics with the rest of his group. I was really shaken up – finding it hard not to burst into tears myself. I went back into the classroom to collect my coat and bag from the cupboard, then went past the little phonics room expecting to see Ben still as upset as I was, but he gave me a huge smile and a very friendly wave as I went past! Walked round town at lunchtime rather than go home and face up to feeling such a failure.

Looking back, this moment seems to illustrate the strong affective elements of my time with Ben, which to me resonates very much with Sara Ahmed's (2010) discussion on the contextuality of happiness (see Section 3.2.3). I really wanted Ben to be happy, but from my perspective as a teacher, his happiness would be increased by being able to read independently, by gaining satisfaction and self-esteem from mastering skills that were frustrating him, and from the prospect of having a more interesting and profitable career in the future with better academic skills. Ben's perspective, on the other hand, seemed to be more in the here and now, in that happiness for him seemed to lie in his friendships with his peers and from getting as close as he could to "being" (or seeming to be, from my perspective) an independent learner.

My reacting so emotionally is possibly because of my identity as a specialist teacher: I *am* the "caring warrior" (Woolhouse, 2016) who saves struggling pupils, so a child who seems to resist being rescued is a child who unsettles my own picture of my success as a specialist teacher. Ehret (2019) draws upon

Dutro and Bien (2014) to cast a very different light on this situation: Ben's resistance to being drawn into the role of 'struggling learner' could be viewed as an internal critique of a system layered with normative and deficit discourses, and a resistance to the "wounds" that can be caused by them. Ben's tears really shook my self-esteem, and it took me several days to restore my internal equilibrium, which was probably why I was so surprised to see how quickly he had recovered, but later wondered if Ben had thought that I was going to 'tell him off' rather than talk through things, and once that danger was past, he was happy again (I do not remember him ever receiving any behaviour sanctions in class, which suggests that 'not being in trouble' was important to him).

6.1.3. Ben and the vibrancy of SWAP and certificates

Eventually, I found a resource that really seemed to have a strong vibrancy (Kuby and Crawford, 2018, Bennett 2010) for Ben: the reading cards game SWAP, which I played with him first on 9th January 2018. This game focuses on words containing 5 or 6 different letter patterns, with a colour for each letter pattern. In addition, there are several SWAP cards, which enable their player to change the colour being played to one that helps the player to use up all their cards and win the game. This means that there is a strategy element, in when to keep or play SWAP cards, but also a great deal of luck in which card is drawn from the top of the pile, so an adult can easily be beaten by a (very jubilant!) child. As well as being sociable and fun, it was importantly a level playing field for adults and children, but as I always insisted that the words had to be read when the card was played, and I picked a set that was at the most helpful level, it also worked on the reading skills I knew Ben needed. In the same lesson, I also began to work with Ben in a pair with another pupil from his class who was not in my study, but with whom I was also following a very similar literacy support programme. This really increased the potential for excitement and fun, especially as the two children sometimes played as a team against me, with much whispering and plotting.

SWAP added a real element of enchantment (Bennett, 2001) to our lessons: games could get really absorbing, especially when they were close, and all of school life around us was forgotten for a moment as we waited tensely for the turn of the next card. It was the first time I had really seen Ben enjoying a literacy activity, as not even being read a story had seemed to appeal to him

very much. Playing SWAP became a central part of our lessons, very much a mediating artefact (Svendson, 2015), and getting him to complete a task became a bit easier when I was able to say that we might run out of time for a game at the end of a lesson if he got distracted or distracted his colleague. I am convinced that working out strategies developed their powers of concentration, and SWAP also had an advantage in that I could, if I felt the pupils' self-esteem or confidence needed a bit of a boost, provide one by carefully engineering a defeat for myself without them realising.

Another sort of resource that seemed to work for Ben, particularly in the social context of working in a pair, was earning certificates for learning to sight read the forty five most commonly occurring English words (in 9 sets of 5, with bronze, silver and gold certificates each time 15 were learned). Normally, I would much rather work with the intrinsic rewards of satisfaction, pride and interest to develop skills, but there are times before learners' skills are not delivering these emotions yet, where an extrinsic reward like a certificate can kick-start some determination, and thus enable more intrinsic rewards to become possible in the longer term. I carefully pitched these activities so that Ben began to experience some success in earning certificates: as early as 3rd November 2017 I wrote that Ben *"just needs "we" to get his bronze –seems very motivated to do it"*, and eventually on 27th of the month he achieved it. Although the certificate was just the one on the left that I printed off my computer at home, their vibrancy seemed to lie in their physical proof of success and achievement, with the potential included in this to be able to learn even more. Ben seemed to enjoy a friendly rivalry in his pair to earn the next one, and to again develop his ability to concentrate, and to have faith in himself as a learner, in the process.

Figure 2: Bronze certificate

6.1.4. Ben, me, and the eddying flows of affect

In the Spring Term of 2018, I continued to follow the structured literacy scheme, adding a letter at a time. We continued to work as a pair with another pupil until the end of the study, as Ben had seemed straight away to be happier in our lessons. One factor in this was that although they were both at a similar level

with their literacy skills, they had different strengths, so at times Ben could complete an activity more confidently than his colleague, which seemed to boost his confidence. Gradually over this term, all the little bits of different styles of input that I managed to persuade Ben to have a go at began to build a skills base, and he achieved the targets I set for him of developing a small sight vocabulary of high frequency words, and being able to blend letter sounds into whole words. Ben was starting to read some of the early school reading books independently, and was getting feedback from adults including his mum and myself about how proud we were of him. On 6th February 2018 I recorded that Ben had asked to read a second book, which was a very big change from having to be routinely coaxed to tackle just one in the previous term.

However, Ben still seemed to experience very mixed emotions about reading: less than a week after requesting a second book, I recorded that on 12th February 2018 he had begun our lesson by declaring "I'm not reading today, I don't like it". I went on to record that I offered the book I had got ready for him to his colleague instead, but Ben changed his mind and read the whole book completely accurately, and seemed really surprised by his success. Sometimes I could see a pattern, for example praise and experiences of success really boosted his enthusiasm, but anything new would worry Ben in case he could not do it, and he would have to be coaxed again. At other times, I could not predict what would happen, and as a result the 'flows of affect' (Stewart, 2007) between us often seemed to swirl around in sometimes quite unpredictable eddies of positive and negatives waves.

28th March 2018: Ben read "The Flying Elephant" with just a few words he needed help with – I nearly cried because it was such a leap from October! I asked him to pick a smiley face for how he feels when he reads now and he picked the biggest smile. I asked how proud he felt of himself and he went for the little smile – he said it wouldn't be the big smile until he got a merit as he had never had one. (Merits were awarded at special assemblies to which the parents of the children receiving them were invited). *I took him back into class for a big fuss from Sue* (the class teacher)*. I said I would not be in tomorrow as it was the last day of term* (and therefore not the normal timetable), *but Ben looked sad and said he would still like to read.*

29th March 2018:.Went in just for reading activities time, but no hug from Ben today unlike earlier in the week. Ben said that he did not want to read – quite a surprise after the day before! The class teacher threw the invitation open to everyone, and I was relieved to see that everybody else's hands shot up. Ben looked quite surprised at their enthusiasm, then put his hand up too. Sue chose Ben and asked him to choose a friend to read with him too: they read a "yellow" book between them. I heard four other children read before I went home: it made a nice change for me to read with some different children and also showed Ben that reading with me was something that other children would like to do.

This is one of the moments from my study that I can still remember vividly. I remember my own confusion that we had been seeming to make such good progress not only with his reading but also with feeling much more comfortable together, but this seemed to have suddenly disappeared, and I was unable to find an explanation. He looked really taken aback at first that everyone wanted to read with me, then ended up looking really happy when he was chosen by the teacher. My feelings changed too: I started by really wishing I had stuck to my original decision of finishing on 28th March, as I had found from experience that the last day of term is not good for support sessions, to being relieved that the rest of the class had seen time with me as a treat rather than a punishment, and hopeful that Ben might change his views in the light of this peer feedback.

Murris's (2019) description of affect as more than just a personal emotion, but as something generated in relationship with another individual or object, and felt bodily, resonated with me at times in my work with Ben: there were points where the figure of speech 'locking horns together' felt like an almost tangible description of the dynamics of one of our less engaged lessons. The more productive times were those when I managed to retain the self-confidence to trust in the process, to be happy to take a while to find all the components of time, space, resources and relationships that would spark together as an "assemblage", and to realise that the flows of affect between us, which seemed to include the whole range of "bindings and unbindings, becomings and unbecoming, jarring disorientation and rhythmic attunements" (Gregg and Siegworth, 2010:2) were probably much more to do with Ben's complex feelings about learning to read than about me.

Fortunately, as Ben did continue to make small steps in developing his reading skills, and we kept amounting clear evidence of this, he began to mellow, and we had more and more lessons with a positive flow of affect, and less contentious lessons. By the end of the summer term he was reading the Oxford Reading Tree “Magic Key” stories, which for me always signal the beginnings of being an independent reader. I feel that this was due to using emergent teaching methods, following Ben’s interests and emotional needs more than strictly following my original teaching plan. This made me feel a bit vulnerable to being judged by staff members as falling short on the standards of a ‘good teacher’, for example a ‘good teacher’ is expected to always have lessons well planned with all the necessary resources to hand. With the benefit of the posthumanist reading I began after working with Ben, I can now frame this as using a “thinking-feeling” pedagogy (Ehret, 2010), rather than the much vaguer ‘teacher’s intuition’.

6.1.5. Implications for practice

My work with Ben seems to have several implications for practice, in the form of suggestions for what may help other learners experiencing similar emotions about learning to read:

- **Third spaces as refuges from both classroom and peer pressure:** having the “third space” (Levy, 2008) of the small office enabled me to create a slightly more relaxed space, both emotionally and physically, than the more formal “schooled” behaviours in the classroom (Hackett et al. 2015), but with the emphasis still kept firmly on learning goals. It also provided a space in which to have a go at activities without any risk of peers noticing any initial attempts that were not immediately successful. These are particularly important for any learner who is very aware of possible judgement by their peers.
- **Pair teaching situations can provide an additional element of support:** while some children really seem to like having the undivided attention of an adult in school, who can thus provide an environment of unconditional positive regard similar to that involved in counselling situations (Wilkins 2000), my time with Ben illustrates how it may not always be the best setting for all children. Davies (2014) reminds us that children as well as adults are searching for opportunities to feel more powerful, effective and

joyful (Davies, 2014:3), and for Ben this seemed to come most powerfully from interactions with his peers. Having another pupil to work with seemed to offer possibilities of some gentle rivalry to boost focus, more enjoyment in playing games than just having me as an opponent, the opportunity to shine in his areas of relative confidence, and someone who shared a similar sense of humour. As soon as we began to work in a pair instead of 1:1, Ben seemed much happier in lessons and relatively less likely to be reluctant to attempt activities, which made me regret not thinking of this earlier. This ties in with the concept of literacy as being relational (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b), as being an enjoyable process of communicating and socialising with others, which can be lost if reading support becomes focused too heavily on the cognitive aspects of remedying gaps in an individual's reading knowledge and skills.

- **Working with a "no" to unlock new teaching opportunities:** a "no" from a pupil in school can be a strongly affective moment (Truman et.al., 2020), as it can feel like both a personal rejection and a public challenge to our professionalism. Although I did succumb a little to these sorts of feelings, I managed mostly to interpret Ben's "no" as a "not in this way, at this moment", which was a much more productive challenge to me to explore different ways to teach the skills that Ben was reluctant to engage with. In doing this, I not only developed some new resources and approaches which helped me with future pupils, but I also reduced the stress that a "no" can engender for both parties. I think Ben's "no" was also telling me that he did not really trust adults in school to be able to help him: a study by Hayley Davies (2019) highlights how little children can sometimes trust the adults in school to listen to and help them, for a variety of factors springing from both school and home circumstances. I think I went through a process of slowly gaining his trust by demonstrating that the risks to his self-confidence in accepting my help would be worth taking, as he began to see that he could make progress, in the form of achieving certificates and visually seeing how he could decode more and more challenging texts as he progressed through the "Benchmarking" assessment booklets.
- **A sense of agency can really help to engage learners**: In many ways, children who find learning in school more difficult have less opportunity to work autonomously because tasks are often differentiated for them by

reducing scope and adding more structure, thus potentially reducing their intrinsic motivation in the process. Higher levels of autonomy in learning activities have been associated, in a wide range of studies, with higher levels of pupil attainment, engagement, well-being and conceptual understanding, and, when combined with empathetic delivery and differentiated learning, can contribute to the development of an intrinsic love of learning (Martinek et al, 2016). This seems to me to be richly illustrated in the "Writers' Studio" study (Kuby and Crawford, 2018), when the children work independently on self-chosen and self-directed literacy activities. It therefore seems worthwhile to try to include elements of choice within activities as much as possible, but in a way that recognises the emotions behind some choices, enabling children to choose activities that they find more engaging as well as boosting their self-esteem by making them feel more empowered as a learner. Although none of them lasted long, giving Ben choices in the first few months helped to engage him enough to develop his skills to enjoy literacy activities more.

6.2. Vignette: Vinnie – and the "mispronunciation" of penguin

I worked with Vinnie as part of Year 1 of my fieldwork, beginning on 16th September 2017 by starting to construct a detailed profile of skills tests, which was part of my original mixed methods research design, and then commencing my intervention with him on 17th October 2017. Our 1:1 lessons took place over seven months, with our last lesson taking place on 16th May 2018, but I continued throughout the whole academic year to work as a volunteer T.A. every morning with Sue, the class teacher, in maths and literacy lessons. Vinnie was one of the youngest pupils in his class, having only turned six a few weeks before starting the new school year in September. I worked with Vinnie mostly on a 1:1 basis, only occasionally working in a pair to cope with timetabling pressures. I planned my work with Vinnie in the same way as I did for Ben, as described previously.

Vinnie was suggested by his class teacher as a participant because he was working at levels below those expected by the school for his age in both literacy and maths lessons, as well as in his reading levels. He had also caused concern in his first year in school, as he had not mastered all the skills expected by school in the spoken language assessments. Sue was also concerned that

he was not very engaged in whole class lessons, although this was never expressed in terms of challenging the school behaviour expectations. Instead, it seemed to be characterised more by drifting off: on 5th December 2017 I recorded in my research journal that Sue had told me that she had asked Vinnie to stand up and have a walk around as she had been worried that he was about to fall asleep in a whole class input session the previous afternoon.

When I first began working with Vinnie, he was reading books from the school reading scheme that were a few levels above the beginner books, but he did not seem to me to be reading them with a suitable level of accuracy or comprehension. This presented me with a dilemma, as I did not want to 'move him down' on the reading scheme, as this would probably be very demotivating for him, but on the other hand, he did not seem to be benefitting from the books he was currently really struggling to decode. I discussed this with Sue on 5th October 2017, and her opinion was that he had been reading more confidently at the end of the previous academic year, but had forgotten a lot of his skills over the summer holiday.

I therefore decided to work with Vinnie using little paper books I made myself, targeting blending sounds into words, especially as I had also decided that my other pupil that year, Ben, would also need the same resource, and I could give them both copies of the same one, to ease my workload. I also decided to use the high frequency word scheme I had developed in my previous school. It had seemed to increase reading comprehension and fluidity if beginner readers could instantly identify the forty five most regularly appearing words in English (high frequency words), so I had divided them into nine sets of five, awarding my home made certificates ("bronze", "silver" and "gold") each time I was convinced that another fifteen words were committed to sight memory. The first few sets focused on very simple words like "is", "it" and "in", so this also allowed for work on blending sounds too. I also included activities designed to develop memory skills, both visual and auditory, as these were part of dyslexia programmes, and also spent some time looking at the texts Sue was about to use in class Literacy lessons, so that Vinnie would hopefully be more familiar with them, and more able to join in with the whole class lessons.

6.2.1. Assembling the pieces of the jigsaw

What struck me the most about my first term working with Vinnie was that he seemed to experience some success in learning the individual skills involved in learning to read, but did not seem to synthesise them together as easily as many of his peers did. He had learnt to blend sounds together in school phonics classes, in which the individual sounds were first identified individually, then read as a whole word (e.g. c-a-t, cat), but he used this format to read every single word in his reading book, including non-phonetic words (t-h-e, the), resulting in a very laborious and time-consuming process, in which it was difficult to retain a sense of the meaning of the text. It was not until 20th November 2017 that I wrote in my research diary that Vinnie was reading some words without sounding them out first, after several weeks of my encouraging him to re-read text he had decoded "like you are talking". Even as he progressed through the levels of letter knowledge in the next term, he would still not recognise letter patterns we had been working on in our lessons successfully, when they appeared in his reading book, and as late as March 13th 2018 I recorded that Vinnie was still not always noticing that what he had read aloud did not make sense. My research diary records events that seem to indicate that Vinnie enjoyed working on his skills, for example on 15th January 2018 he asked to complete one of our lessons that had ended part of the way through when he was collected to go to the dentist, and on 3rd November 2017 I noted that when he got his bronze certificate for learning his high frequency words, he seemed "thrilled!" Although Vinnie seemed to like completing all these separate activities, they did not seem for him to come together as the enjoyable, mean-making experience that reading is for more confident readers.

At first, Vinnie was very quiet in our lessons, but over the weeks he began to tell me a bit more about his life at home and his interests:

February 27th 2018: Vinnie very chatty today – we made up a little story about what Vinnie told me about playing in the snow this weekend. We were doing "qu" today and he told me about "quitter birds" who led honey badgers to honey, but I couldn't find anything at home on Google about them…. Found Vinnie "Pip and the monkey" to read next as it was on an animal story

February 28th 2018: Asked Vinnie again about the quitter birds, and said I hadn't been able to find anything out about them. He told me again about them leading the honey bears to the honey, and that he had seen it on his iPad at home. He said he wanted to be a zookeeper when he grows up, and watches lots of programmes about wild animals.

The extent not only of Vinnie's interest in animals but also his knowledge about them became clearer, as I managed to find more books he could read that had animals in them, and we talked more about his interest. However, I did learn quite a salutary lesson one day a few weeks later when we were walking together down the corridor to return to Vinnie's classroom:

March 12th: Vinnie surprised me today – he wanted to stop and look at a display in the corridor about endangered animals. I thought he had mispronounced "penguin" but he said "no, pangolin" and when I looked at the display again I saw a picture of a pangolin, which I had never heard of before! Had to google it when I got home!

I remember very clearly still my embarrassment standing in the corridor: I had been patiently correcting what I had thought was Vinnie's mispronunciation of "penguin", positioning myself as "expert" and Vinnie as "learner", when it turned out that in this matter Vinnie was in fact the "expert" and I was the person who had learnt something new! I realised then that I had seriously underestimated Vinnie, that I had just accepted his positioning as 'struggling' in the classroom because of his failure to perform well in school activities, but had not considered that this may have been due to struggling to find interest in them, rather than ability. Although this moment was initially uncomfortable, it did turn out to be in hindsight an example of what Davies (2014) describes as "letting go of my adult, teacherly self who presumes to already know and to know better", replacing this with learning to listen more carefully at a deeper level and thus experiencing a "moment of grace when new possibilities open up" (Davies 2014:15).

It gradually became clear that Vinnie had a whole world of literacy enjoyment at home, based round his love of animals, and stories or information about them: he told me on 2nd March 2018 that his favourite book was "The Jungle Story". His literacies activities at home seemed to be in different media, as he was

acquiring levels of information from documentaries on the iPad, which he would not have been able to access in print. His interest in animals seemed to be shared at home, as he told me later in the year that his family were going on safari as a holiday. As I managed to make more links between his home and school literacies, by finding more animal books to read, and talking with him about animals, his confidence grew in his abilities to do school literacy activities. Serendipitously, the two came together in the school reading comprehension assessment task:

March 26th 2018: Sat with Ben and Vinnie while they did school reading assessment. Vinnie very confident on section about African animals – had to stop him writing everything he knew about all the animals so he had time to answer all the questions!

Being given a text to read that really interested him seemed to pay off in terms of boosting Vinnie's accuracy and comprehension skills just when it would be noticed the most:

April 18th 2018: Sue (Vinnie's class teacher) gave me the scores from the school reading tests – Vinnie had gone up over a year in a term and a half! But it was about African animals! Vinnie has gone up a reading group because of his test results.

It seemed then that Vinnie had begun to assemble the disparate pieces of his reading skills and interests together, to start forming a whole picture of reading confidently and accurately for meaning and enjoyment. My role in this seemed to have been helping to reveal, and then strengthen, possible links between elements that had remained resolutely disconnected before.

6.2.2. The "muchness" of hippopotamuses

My time working with Vinnie really helped me to understand more about the transformative potential of strong flows of positive affect in literacy learning. As Vinnie gradually got more confident about talking about wild animals in our lessons, and as I was able to link our literacy learning to his passion, the intensity of the 'flow of affect' (Stewart, 2007) became stronger. It was not so much linked to interpersonal aspects of our time together, as we seemed to have a warm but perfectly ordinary level of rapport. It seemed instead to be

more intrapersonal, as I became caught up in Vinnie's joy in learning about wild animals, and by finding more resources and reading opportunities centred on it, was able to add more dimensions to his enthusiasm. While I never managed to find books that Vinnie could read independently that featured rhinoceros, which were Vinnie's favourite wild animal (he told me on 19th January 2018 that when he grew up he wanted to be a rhino keeper at the zoo), I did manage to find some that were about hippopotamuses, which he seemed happy with as the nearest thing. These hippopotamus books seemed to overflow with "muchness" (Thiel, 2018) for Vinnie.

At the end of my time working with both Vinnie and Ben, Sue gave me her feedback as their class teacher that for both of them their confidence had increased "tenfold", and they were both much more engaged in class across the curriculum. Lenz Taguchi (2010) writes that learning has the potential to be seen as so much more than the acquisition of knowledge or skills: it can also be transformative. She draws upon Karen Barad's thinking to posit that learning and knowing "takes place in the interconnections in-between different matter making themselves intelligible to each other" (Lenz Taguchi, 2010:6). Reading can be seen as very much an assemblage of skills rather than a single skill, or even just several separate skills used simultaneously, because of the way in which each element enhances and interacts with the others, and putting these together is a demanding new skill to learn, underpinned by the understanding that text should make sense and have meaning for the reader (Johnson, 2017). The school literacy curriculum seemed to be of little importance to Vinnie: he did not seem particularly upset that he was not making progress or might be judged because of this. However, it seemed that once he began to realise how learning to read more confidently could help him learn more about animals, he began to read in a way that was much more a dialogue between the text and his thoughts, and his reading accuracy improved because of this.

Vinnie found real enchantment in learning about the world of wild animals. Bennett (2001) writes that enchantment "is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound" and adds that Philip Fisher describes this as a "moment of pure presence" (Bennett 2001:5). While feeling spellbound is commonly more associated with becoming completely engrossed in fiction, Burnett and Merchant (2018) argue that reading non-fiction

can also have the same affective response, describing their own enchantment in reading about a remote Scottish island, and imagining a possible future life there. Their reading was digital, just as Vinnie's interest had been sparked by wildlife documentaries online, which would have been a more sensory experience with sound and movement (and probably tension as for example prey were stalked) than text alone. Burnett and Merchant describe reading as "inextricably entangled not just with text but with other people, places and things" (Burnett and Merchant, 2018a:67) but it seemed to me that "reading" to Vinnie was decoding words to please adults, until it became entangled with his interest in animals and began to become a "something that felt like *some*thing" (Stewart, 2007:2) to him in an affective encounter.

6.2.3. Implications for practice

My time working with Vinnie suggests the five following implications for practice:

- **Third spaces**: While having a "third space" to work in, in the form of the little office, was very important to Ben in providing a space away from the possible judgement of his peers, for Vinnie it seemed instead to provide him with a quiet space in which to find his own voice within school. It also gave me the space to then bring into our literacy learning activities that were specific to Vinnie, once he had begun to tell me about his interest in wild animals.
- **Listening to children**: Setting aside our teacher agenda to make space to properly listen to what children are saying to us, both literally and in terms of the implications of what they are saying, can sometimes take us nearer to achieving our learning goals for them than by concentrating overly on what we are going to say next, a process described by Davies (2014) and discussed in Section 3.6.2. I learnt not only about pangolins as I stood by the endangered animals display with Vinnie, I also learnt that I was perhaps too much entrenched in my position as caring warrior trying to 'save' my pupils, when I should in fact be listening to them giving me clues in how to open up ways for them to develop their own literacy desirings', and in this process, their own skills.
- **Literacy as event**: My experiences with Vinnie seem in a way to be a possible template for how Burnett and Merchant's (2018b) ideas about

"literacy as event" can be harnessed as part of literacy support teaching. In the assemblage of our time together was included not only the animal-themed reading books, but the knowledge and excitement gained digitally at home, and my willingness to be an audience for Vinnie's enthusiasm in school. Vinnie's home experiences alone were not enough to ignite his interest in acquiring reading skills in school, it needed our social interactions too.

- **Enchantment:** Vinnie seemed to me to have found enchantment (Bennett, 2001: see Section 3.3.1.) at home in his love of wild animals, but to have found so little enchantment in any of the school literacy activities, that he seemed to have become disenchanted with acquiring reading skills. Bringing elements into his learning that he found enchanting seemed to reverse this process, by helping him to engage with literacy activities as a part of his whole life, not just individual tasks in school. The implication for my own practice is that while I put a lot of effort into trying to make my lessons interesting and enjoyable for my pupils, it is from a more generic stance of what I had found to be popular in the past. If I had found out more about Vinnie as an individual sooner, I could have made my lessons more appealing to him with less intensive effort on my part.
- **Transformative literacies:** However, just providing Vinnie with books he found more interesting would not, in my opinion, have been enough to help him catch up with his peers in reading, because we also worked on some of the more irregular patterns in English orthography that he did not know, at the same time, as well as some reading strategies, for example tracking text with his finger so he did not lose his place as much. This can be viewed more traditionally as falling within the model of applying the teaching of reading strategies and phonic skills to texts that pupils find engaging, which has been found more effective than pursuing either strategy separately (Johnson, 2017). Alternatively, it can be seen as an assemblage in which the potential for growth is situated in the intra-actions between the structured reading scheme I use, Vinnie's interest in animals, texts featuring animals, and the unique combination of Vinnie as a pupil and myself as a support teacher. It is important to remember that reading for pleasure, as Alexander and Jarman (2018) point out, is for many people, both adults and children, is quite often non-fiction, instead of or alongside, fiction.

6.3. Vignette: Rose – reading as an adventure

I worked with Rose as part of Year 2 of my fieldwork, from 23rd October 2018 to 4th April 2019. Rose was suggested by Sue as a participant as she was working below the levels expected by school for her age across the curriculum, including literacy skills. When we began working together, Rose was aged six, and had mastered the basics of decoding words with single letter/sound correspondences. Our next steps therefore was to work on non-phonetic patterns, for example "-ight", which I planned in an individual learning plan similar to that in Appendix D, and delivered in individual lessons using the structure described in Appendix C. Rose had progressed beyond the first levels of the school reading book scheme, and seemed happy with the books allocated to her under the school reading book scheme: on 8th November 2018 I recorded in my journal that she asked for two school reading books when I was planning to offer her just one. I was confident that I already had a range of resources at home that would be suitable for Rose.

We began working 1:1, but changed to working in a pair with Emily from the 12th December 2018. Our usual pattern of working was to complete one lesson plan over three twenty minute sessions, either first thing in the morning or in class reading lessons when Sue was not working with the reading group Rose was in. I also provided T.A. support in class maths lessons, in a voluntary capacity, with the group that both Emily and Rose were in.

Rose was the third out of four children, in a large extended family that lived locally: Rose seemed extra pleased on 15th November 2018 about going up in assembly to collect her school merit certificate because her cousin who was in another class in school would see her get it. Rose's biggest topic of conversation in our lessons was her family, especially the exciting news on 25th January 2019 that she was going to have a new member of the family in the summer, and then the excitement building up to her Mum and Dad's big revelation of the gender of her new sibling.

6.3.1. Rose and the running race

One of the most striking affective qualities of my time working with Rose was how calm she generally seemed to be: our 1:1 lessons were characterised by a positive and productive feeling. This calmness seemed important to Rose: on

14th February 2019 I recorded in my journal that she picked a blue colouring pencil to work with, saying that she liked blue because it was a calm colour. The "moment of muchness" (Thiel, 2018) that struck me as most typifying Rose's calmness was the day of the whole school fundraising sponsored run:

16th November 2018: Half way through, Rose collected to take part in a sponsored run on the school field - went out too to watch. Rose really struggled in the fun run – a T.A. ran by her side for the last bit as she was coming in last. Rose did not seem at all flustered - when we got back inside I asked Rose if she had enjoyed the run, and she answered: "yes, but I am not a fast runner".

The "muchness" in this moment (Thiel, 2018) for me was that Rose had genuinely looked happy, and not just putting on a brave face in a situation which many other children would have found embarrassing, as everyone else completed the race independently. She did not seem to feel positioned as "less", either by her lack of speed or by coming in "last". She seemed quite comfortable in joining in with the run in her own way, and I felt really impressed by her ability to do so.

Gail Boldt writes about the importance of "attending to the flow of affect and energy" Boldt, 2019:39) in both teaching and therapy situations, building a sense of "attunement" with pupils. Working with Rose was unusual, because she was already enthusiastic about reading despite being seen as 'struggling', and I had to be careful to preserve this. Davies (2014) writes that emergent listening is about being present with the child, being aware of the reality of that moment of talking together, which may not be the supposedly "objective" reality an adult expects, and which may in fact be an opportunity for the adult to learn from the child, and grow as a practitioner. The next "moment of muchness" (Thiel, 2018) illustrates an incident that made me think very carefully about rushing in too quickly with teacher-based judgements.

6.3.2. Rose and the backpack of books

27th November 2018: Rose's backpack seemed heavy on the way to our lesson: there were half a dozen "chapter books" in it, all of them too hard for her to read independently. I said that she must like books to have so many in her bag and she agreed. I need to ask her tomorrow about actually reading them to find out more about what she thinks.

<u>28th November 2018:</u> Just quick lesson as Rose wanted to go to the nativity play rehearsal – seemed proud she could do her line without the script. I asked if she can do it in a big voice, so she showed me! I asked about the books – she said that she read them by herself at bedtime because she likes them. I asked what she did if she didn't know a word, did she try to sound it out, and she said yes. I asked how reading made her feel - she answered "adventurous when I read the princess book". I asked if that was because you lived in a story's world and she said yes.

I had expected Rose, thinking about her books entirely from my 'reading teacher's' perspective, to comment on some aspect of coping with their trickiness, but her answer about the princess book showed that she had got a lot more of the gist of the stories than I would have expected from the gap between their reading level difficulty and my estimate of Rose's current reading skills. It also showed that Rose had completely disregarded her positioning as a 'blue book reader' on the school structured reading scheme, and chosen books she would like to read, then tackled them as best she could independently without worrying whether her reading skills were good enough or not. Rose seemed to have her own "literacy of no" (Truman et al.,2020) based on the very positive saying of "no" to in any way feeling "wounded" by the "normative and deficit discourses" of the schooled world (Ehret, 2010), and having the courage to make her own decisions about what she would like to read.

Rose's comment about feeling "adventurous" also suggested that she had experienced the feeling of enchantment, of being transported into an imaginary world (Burnett and Merchant, 2018a), that is often hard for struggling readers to experience because they are focusing so hard on decoding individual words. Spector and Kidd (2019) explore the contrasts between a child's perceptions of the joy and magic in their intra-actions with the world (illustrated by a memory from Spector's own childhood of a moment of enchantment being punctured by an irritated teacher), which they describe as experiences of "muchness": full of potential and emergence; with, on the other hand, some of the adult constructs in education, which they liken to Frankenstein's monster, a creation that turns out to be more powerful and destructive than its creator ever envisaged. Rose seemed to be focused on the "muchness" (Thiel, 2018) of her chapter books: their potential to take her into not only magical other worlds of stories, but also

into the new territory of being an independent reader. I felt quite uncomfortable that I was the one who had bought into the “monster” that was the schooled literacy model: designed initially to help children learn to read but in reality causing unintended problems like reading becoming a series of skills hurdles to jump through, rather than any expression of interests or personality. I think that Rose was indeed quite adventurous, not in terms of being unconventional or risk taking, but in terms of being happy to think about exploring potentials without guarantees of end points to a journey, which requires self-confidence.

Too often, teachers delivering the ‘schooled’ (Street 1993) version of Literacy lessons can fail to take into account that literacy can mean different things to the children it is being delivered to. Laursen and Fabrin (2013) explore what children perceive to be the benefits of acquiring literacy skills, and how this impacts upon their identities as readers. They draw upon Peirce’s (1995) theory that an important factor in a child’s decision to invest in (work hard to acquire) literacy skills, or sometimes not to, is the resulting impact this will have on their social status. They write about three different children, only one of whom is keen to be seen as a “reader”: of the two other two, one associates reading a lot with being a “nerd” who struggles socially, and the other is happier to position herself as someone who cannot read but draws instead. They conclude that children do not necessarily “buy into” the “schooled” view of literacy learning, but instead may come to their own conclusions, which may change over the course of time.

Laursen and Fabrin (2013) draw upon Brandt’s (2001) concept of literacy sponsors, who mediate children’s access to literacy learning, including school staff, parents and extended family at home, and members of their communities, who may have similar views on the value of acquiring literacy skills, or widely differing. This offers the possibility for adults in school to open up spaces for children to see reading in a different light, and also themselves as readers as a consequence, or simply to redefine themselves within their existing constructs. I think this was one of my key contributions to Rose’s development as a reader was that I allowed her sense of agency to flourish, by reigning in my “teacherly” side, which did not seem to be contributing as much.

6.3.3. Implications for practice:

- **Reading scheme books alone are not enough** While I remain convinced that there is a place for levelled reading books in learning to read because it helps to identify the "scaffolded" zone between independence and helplessness in which Vygotsky (1962) believed learning happened most effectively, Rose illustrates that other books can have a vital role too. Rose's "chapter books" are a vivid illustration of how including pupil choice as well as structured scheme books can help not only with enjoyment of literacy activities but also act as a buffer between a less confident decoder and the social positioning of a "struggling reader" in the classroom. Burnett and Merchant (2018a) argue for a wider range of literacy activities to be regarded as learning opportunities, which would suggest encouraging reading "reading books" to be accompanied by paired reading with an adult, or listening to audio books, to develop or maintain a love of literacy in any or all forms. An ideal example of this is Moses and Kelly's (2018) experiment in creating a whole class culture of a love of books and reading, which would, if the funding for the purchase of additional books building on children's interests and preferences were available, be a template for every primary school class.
- **Reading difficulties do not necessarily result in loss of self-confidence** Rose also illustrates that reading difficulties alone do not necessarily affect self-esteem, as children's perceptions of themselves as a learner are more significant. This indicates the importance of not looking at self confidence in children just as an element of their personality, or consequence of their particular experiences, but also as a consequence of the learning environment they are in, and work towards not just giving praise to individual children but to creating a whole context of excitement about learning. However, the data driven, performative pressures upon schools currently can make addressing this situation very hard for individual class teachers.

6.4. Vignette: Emily - "Really weird to feel how important knowing the sound of someone's voice is"

I worked with Emily as part of Year 2 of my fieldwork, from 10th October 2018 to 26th April 2019. Emily was six years old when we began working together. Sue suggested Emily quite hesitantly as a participant for my study, as her reading

was assessed by the school as being below the levels expected for her age, but supporting her reading development would be more challenging because Emily was exceptionally anxious in school, and did not speak; even outside school, she only talked to her immediate family. Her parents could not pinpoint anything that may have triggered this response. A Speech and Language Therapist was working with Emily, and had advised school to do small group or partner activities designed to help her feel more relaxed in school. As the focus of my study had changed from focusing on my reading support intervention to focusing on pupil confidence, choosing Emily as a participant felt daunting, but was also an opportunity to learn new approaches and insights.

As I had no professional experience at all with selective mutism, which occurs rarely (Lang et al, 2016), I was reliant on what I was able to find in some of the literature around it. Selective mutism is defined clinically by a child being able to speak clearly and communicate well in specific situations, but not speaking at all in others. This led to it being viewed previously as a form of oppositional behaviour because the child was perceived as 'choosing' not to talk to particular people, but this has now been replaced by the theory that it is severe anxiety at the root of this reaction, triggering the fight, flight or freeze response (Kovac and Furr, 2019). As the child's underlying speech and language skills are often unimpaired, their academic progress is frequently on a par with their peers (Cunningham et al, 2004), because they are able to listen to and internally engage with the whole class teaching, although their participation in some activities is limited, for example group work.

Working with Emily presented two immediate challenges that I had no pre-existing knowledge or experience to tackle: how to develop a rapport if we could not have a two-way conversation, and how to assess Emily's current skills levels or ongoing progress without her reading aloud. As Emily was still only six, and at the 'emergent' stage of writing, using phonetic equivalents to represent the sounds in words, using written communication was still quite laborious for her and not always easy for me to decode.

6.4.1. Learning a new language

Since the beginning of the term in September 2018, I had been volunteering as a T.A. in class maths lessons, usually on the table where Emily sat, so I had

begun to get used to communicating with Emily through gesture or ad hoc signs. Emily was very reticent even in her non-verbal communication: her use of facial expressions was very careful, and she would make the smallest possible gestures, and only if she really needed to. She usually seemed happy to point to one or other of written or drawn choices, and to indicate a number with the matching number of fingers. This was an important time for us both to take the first steps in getting to know each other, for me to begin to understand how I might approach teaching literacy, and for Emily to begin to trust me a little. During this time, I had been in email communication with Emily's parents to build up some background knowledge, and they had been talking to Emily at home to prepare her, and to be sure that she was happy to work with me. Even so, I recorded in my research journal:

10th October 2018: "Finally started working with Emily. I was really nervous in case she didn't want to come out with me, but she was fine."

Once we began to work 1:1, I realised that I was not only communicating by 'reading' Emily's gestures, but also by trying to 'read' her body language more intently in the absence of spoken words. Davies (2014) describes this sort of listening as "emergent", because it is about not only fitting what is heard into existing knowledge and relationship expectations, but also being open to the possibility of all participants learning and growing from what is said and heard. She explains that:

> Such listening involves stretching the ears, and all the senses. It requires a focused attention, an intensification of attention to the other, and to the happening in-between (Davies, 2014:42)

Davies (2014) comments that children are often already very adept at this themselves, and illustrates, with some vignettes of children in the Nursery she visited in Sweden, how children can listen to each other by playing together and communicating mainly by facial expression, eye contact and reciprocal play, with very little shared spoken language. My listening to Emily was "emergent" (Davies, 2014), particularly because I needed to learn from Emily herself how to respond to her, to both form a rapport and also to meet her learning needs, because I had had no experience of teaching a child who does not speak in school before. As children often use embodied learning more than adults (Leonard et al., 2015) it was possibly a steeper learning curve for me than for

Emily. I began to realise how nuanced the use of gesture can be, in much the same way as spoken language can be, as Emily's use of very restrained gesture seemed to be the equivalent of talking very quietly or of giving the briefest of answers.

Initially, Emily was very visibly anxious: she held her body very tensely, with angular shoulders and elbows, and her eyes were wary and worried. It seemed, particularly at first, that Emily was really not at all sure she could trust me, and any silences crackled with tension. I was very conscious of trying to fill those silences by being very positive and jolly, but in the process feeling that I was sounding overly loud and somewhat saccharine. I also found there was a difference between a silence that seems to naturally inhabit a pause in conversation, and a silence that opens up when one person speaks and the other does not reply. Someone not responding when being spoken to directly is often perceived as disrespectful: a sign that the speaker is either seen as not worth the effort of a reply, or as deserving to be excluded in some way. Although I knew consciously that Emily was not being disrespectful, and I tried very hard not to say things in a way that sounded like I expected a response, I still could not always get rid of a residual response of feeling 'ignored'. There are several comments in my research journal along these lines, for example:

14th November 2018: was telling Sue (the class teacher) how emotionally hard Emily not talking is – it feels like rejection even if your head knows it differently.

Throughout my work with Emily, her voice was very much an absent presence: something whose absence could be felt almost tangibly. Moran and Disney (2019) illustrate this by quoting Sartre's description of his failed meeting with "Pierre" in a café, and how "Pierre's" absence became a real event in the life of the café as his failure to arrive affected the whole atmosphere within the café, and they write that absences can be experienced almost as a haunting, and that a key element is often the disruption of expectations. Although they are writing about absent presence in a completely different context, that of prison visiting rather than education, their view that absences can be nuanced seemed particularly pertinent to my work with Emily, partly because it prompted me to explore the complex affective tones resulting from it, and partly because it also raised the associated idea of present absence, where a person is physically present, but seems to be emotionally or socially distant.

Moran and Disney (2019) write about present absence in the context of the pain felt by prisoners who eagerly await a visitor who then spends the brief time focusing on their phone, which really seemed to resonate with my experiences. I came to realise that one aspect of someone not talking out loud, even if there are other forms of communication, is that the physicality of how someone speaks is part of your picture of who they are, for example whether they have a quiet or loud voice, their rate of speech, or whether they have an accent, and without this you feel you do not quite know them as well. This is also true of the idiosyncratic way that every individual uses language. I noticed this quite early on:

17th October 2018: Really weird to feel how important knowing the sound of someone's voice is.

And it was also spontaneously commented on at a much later point by another pupil, Rose, when she began to work in a pair with Emily:

10th January 2019: Rose commented in the lesson that she didn't know what Emily's voice was like.

As well as not talking, Emily's initial high levels of anxiety meant that she was hesitant about getting involved with activities, so although she was physically present, the essence of who she really was, particularly at first, seemed very absent.

By 18th October 2018, Emily seemed a little more relaxed. To develop Emily's memory skills, we played "Kim's game" with some autumn objects, in which Emily drew the item she thought was missing, and also tapped my arm to tell me she had finished hiding her choice of item and I could turn back to look. As her parents had said she enjoyed playing games at home, I picked this day to try the reading game SWAP (I had to read the words of course, but I did say she had to promise to look carefully at them when I did so), and she did seem to really enjoy it, although she found the strategy element quite tricky. She was also making progress with remembering random strings of numbers, looking positively happy and pleased with herself when she improved on her previous scores.

It was not until the very last lesson we had as part of my fieldwork that I felt that Emily was really comfortable with me. I noted in my research diary that we were sitting side by side playing my 'words within words' lotto game, and Emily put a card straight on the discard pile without checking it against the words on the board, so I asked if she remembered it from before and she nodded, but this time it felt a companionable nod where words were not needed, rather than omitted. The strongest affective tone of my work with Emily was nervousness, on both sides. I was very unsure of myself, not only because I had no experience of working with a pupil who did not talk in school, but also because this form of emergent teaching is much harder when the feedback to check that it is following the pupil's interests and needs is much more difficult to gauge: I wrote in my research diary that I felt very much that I was feeling my way in the dark. Even when Emily began to make noticeable progress, I still felt nervous because I was still none the wiser about the next steps after that, and also because I had created a third space in which it was acceptable to break the rules a bit, I was not sure how to keep this a bit relaxed, but not too relaxed for school. Emily also seemed very nervous, not only because she was generally anxious, but she also seemed wary that I would try to get her to talk. However, the shared nervousness in a way was also a bond, as I could empathise with her nervousness, and I tried to talk about times when I had not been sure what to say, or felt I had not done something as well as I could have, to try to show her that empathy.

6.4.2. Listening to reading when there is nothing to hear

As a large component of my teaching involved the practice known as "hearing a child read", it was obvious that I was going to have to rethink my lesson planning so that I could help Emily with her reading, which was below the levels expected by school for her age (based on reports from her Mum about her reading at home, and her performance on a school reading comprehension task with written answers), without her reading aloud to me. I usually begin my work with a new pupil by assessing the levels to start activities on: easy enough to ensure some success, but with enough challenge to ensure some progress. Hearing reading is always my starting point, so I had to improvise straight away.

I decided that I could assess spelling, which would also give clues to phonological awareness, for example by missing sounds in blends, visual

memory skills, and picture story ordering for narrative skills. I also tried some tests for reasoning skills that involved pointing to the correct choice of picture, because I was keen to find out anything I could about Emily's strengths as a learner. She achieved scores that the test booklet indicated were at least those expected for her age, suggesting that her progressing in maths a rate which was slower than expected by school was also likely to be related to anxiety. I kept telling Emily how all the activities we were doing related to helping her with her reading, and saying to her that if she shrugged her shoulders at any point I would know that I had not explained something properly and would try again to make it clearer.

I used the assessments I had done to construct an individual learning plan, similar to the one in Appendix D. I decided to base my work with Emily on the same structured literacy support programme that I was using with the other children, because I felt confident that I could help her to develop her spelling skills, and could see what her next steps would be. I was a little less sure about her reading skills, but thought developing her knowledge of non-phonetic letter patterns (like –ight or –ite) would probably be helpful with developing her reading accuracy. I did not feel qualified to address Emily's confidence to speak out loud in school directly, due to my lack of qualification or experience in this area. I used the same lesson planning format (see Appendix C for an example) because I felt more confident with the familiarity, chunking one plan into two or three twenty minute lessons, as I did with my other pupils. However, I knew that I would have to be much more flexible with my lesson plans in order to adapt them for Emily not speaking out loud, and that I would have to be led very much by what Emily was happy to do, or what I found worked by trial and error.

We began with some memory work of repeating sound patterns made on some maracas, taking it in turns to make up the pattern or to copy it, and I explained how you can improve your memory with practice, and Emily was happy to do this. I communicated what we were doing to the T.A. who worked 1:1 with Emily on the tasks advised by the Speech Therapist, and she said she had tried a very similar activity, but Emily had not wanted to join in, and she felt that Emily was happier to work in the context of improving her reading rather than anything geared to encouraging her to make some sounds in school. I think being able to

shut the small office door (Emily nodded her preference when I asked) helped too, rather than being in the T.A.'s more open work space off the corridor.

I also still needed to find ways round reading out loud, especially as recording Emily reading at home, as suggested in books on selective mutism, had already been ruled out by Emily herself previously. I knew that Emily's parents read with her regularly at home and corresponded with the school staff in a home/school communication book, and now that she seemed more comfortable with me, I asked her (on 14th November 2018) whether she would mind her Mum doing a running record on paper of her reading at home for me to look at in school. I showed her that it would just mean her Mum putting a tick for all the words she had read correctly straight away, then some codes (e.g. an o above a word that had been omitted, or sc for words that had been self-corrected unprompted) for me to see how she had worked out the rest.

Both Emily and her Mum were happy with this, and it turned out to be really useful: I could explain to Emily that I always said that working out nine out of every ten words and only needing help for one word in every ten was good reading, and that if every single word was read correctly there was nothing in the book to learn from, to help someone become a better reader. When I asked Emily if she thought she had read well, when she had not read every single word accurately, she shook her head and looked quite worried. This indicated to me that Emily might be being very hard on herself, and opened the door for my little talks on the "learning zone" where work is a little bit tricky but not too hard, and my being able to empathise with her not liking finding something difficult due to my current feeble attempts to keep up in an exercise class at the leisure centre we both went to (Emily had passed me a few times on her way into swimming lessons, as I left, very red and over-heated). Levy (2008) writes about the conceptual aspects of a "third space" as a navigational space to bridge different concepts of literacy between school and home, but in Emily's case the "third space" was the running record's potential to bring an echo of her reading out loud at home into the small office in school.

Because Emily seemed so hesitant about joining in with activities, particularly in class, using my own personal experiences rather than starting from any professional experience, I began to feel that I should work towards helping her to feel more of a sense of her own agency as a step towards helping her feel

more confident. On 8th November 2018 I decided to try to find out more about her likes and dislikes, and asked what she wanted to be when she grew up. She had a good go at spelling “hairdresser” on her whiteboard. I ordered a book on hairstyles for girls, and we began to make a book in which I attempted to draw all the styles from the book that Emily liked, as she declined that task, although she was happy to colour them in. I noticed that Emily was coming into school with her hair done in some of the ponytail variations she liked, so I was really pleased that she was expressing herself a little more, but also worried that I had created a lot of extra work for her Mum to do before school. I asked if she knew how to plait her hair, and she indicated she did not, so I took some long strips of paper in and taught her the technique.

I checked with Sue, the class teacher, that she was happy for me to take this detour from straight teaching of reading, but she said that she felt that this was what Emily needed too, which was reassuring, because I had been following her interests in an emergent way, with no guarantees that I would get results. Stepping away from the school curriculum for teaching literacy was a little nerve-wracking, as we were not looking at “literary” conventions like clauses and conjunctions, but instead were moving in the realms of hairdressing, which has long been seen as one of the default options for the “non-academic” pupils, and I felt very open to being criticised for not focusing on what are perceived in school as “good” texts. Burnett and Merchant (2018b), however, argue for literacy to be seen in a much broader context, including in schools, focusing on the relational aspects of shared stories and texts as “events”. However, we did seem to be moving in the right direction, as Emily did seem to be a little less anxious now: I noted in my journal:

18th November 2018: “Trying to work out how Emily looked different - her face seemed to glow instead of looking quite so withdrawn and grey.”

6.4.3. Beginning to work in a pair with Rose

In the middle of December, we were running out of ideas for the hair book, plus time was getting tighter for lessons with Christmas preparations, so on 14th December 2018 I decided to try Emily in a pair lesson with Rose, and this was a great success, both girls seeming to really enjoy it. We played “Starspell”, a variation on snakes and ladders, which I had adapted with sets of different

words to spell depending on what we were learning, and Emily was more confident in getting the correct –y endings, while Rose was more likely to go for the phonetic –I, which was a boost for Emily's confidence. I decided to take the risk of letting the "fun" aspect of playing the game go up a few notches, even though we were in the much more open "little kitchen" space that day, and I was worried that my behaviour management skills may have been open to judgement by members of staff. I let the two girls be a team against me, and I lost all three games we played, exaggerating my disappointment, as I could see Emily giggling silently behind her hand, then to my surprise, she giggled out loud, the first sound apparently that anyone had heard her make in school.

I decided to continue with this strategy in the new term:

9th January 2019: Pair lesson with Rose and Emily. Rose asked what game we were playing, and when I said "Starspell", Rose asked if they could be a team against me again. Emily started breaking the rules straight away – moved her counter to the top, mine straight down to the start again, and showed me a different spelling card so it looked like I had made a spelling mistake! Both of them were giggling loudly, and continued as we walked back to the classroom door. Sue (the class teacher) *quickly realised, and asked me about my "two giggly girls", so I hammed up mock indignation at being beaten, and both girls apparently continued giggling together through the literacy lesson – the first time she has made any sound in the classroom! The only trouble will be getting them to settle down for a serious bit of the lesson at the beginning of tomorrow's lesson!*

I could hardly believe the difference between the hesitant, anxious Emily that I had known in school previously, and the confident Emily who completely took control of the game and ran it to her own rules, drawing Rose in, in a conspiracy against me! I had tacitly given permission in that I did not stop it immediately it began, and played my assigned role in Emily's version of the game, but I had not actively suggested or encouraged this approach: it was Emily having the confidence to assert herself in a game situation, behaving at school in the same way (as I later learned) that she did at home. I think that this was in part due to an entanglement of our "third space", which was more relaxed than the classroom; having a sympathetic peer for moral support; being in a learning situation that felt comfortable because it was similar to her experiences at home

and having built up a relationship with me in which she felt she could trust me a little.

However, I think that the real trigger for all these factors coming together in an entanglement at that particular moment was the enchantment aspect of playing a game. Bennett (2001) writes that enchantment frequently contains within it a "feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition" often resulting in "a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life" (Bennett, 2001:5). I think that this aspect of enchantment leading to the possibility of disruption gave "Starspell" an agency within the assemblage of itself, Emily, Rose, myself and our "third space" away from the classroom. It felt like Emily's rule about playing games was that their rules were there to be broken, and thus "Starspell" almost took on the persona of a "Lord of Misrule", a tradition from Tudor times in which all the usual authority figures (in our case me) were ruled by someone chosen from much lower down the normal hierarchy (Emily), and there was a brief window in the everyday drudgery for merriment, anarchy and joy.

I found Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) writing very helpful in thinking about the possibilities of materials in educational settings: provoking educators, inciting questions and setting things in motion. Nothing else had had even a fraction of the response from Emily that "Starspell" invoked: she changed from being anxious and hesitant to confident and proactive. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2017) point out that materials can also exert agency beyond learning opportunities, impacting upon relationships too, when they can be "caught up in the world's flows, rhythms and intensities" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al, 2017:15). Our reading games became a very important part of the relationships between both Emily and myself, and with Rose as well, and also a very strong factor in the affective flows in our lessons, bringing laughter for the girls, and also a little trepidation for me.

Working in a pair with Rose seemed from a conventional teaching perspective to be a really positive move for Emily. She was the more confident speller of the two, which seemed to be a self-esteem booster, plus when Rose read aloud I could praise her for trying out reading strategies like sounding out the letters and blending the sounds together, or going back unprompted if what she had read did not make sense, thus in the process showing Emily, in the absence of

being able to respond to her own reading, that these were the skills that were valuable as learning opportunities, rather than reading every word correctly first time. Having someone else there who responded when I talked to them made me feel much more relaxed, as the situation felt much more comfortable for me, so this probably made Emily feel more comfortable too.

Having a peer to do things with seemed to help Emily feel more confident. Emily had shaken her head when I asked if she would like a house point as a reward, and nodded yes when I asked if it was embarrassing going to post the token into the box in the classroom. I asked Rose in a 1:1 lesson on 5th February 2019 if she would be happy to go with Emily to put house point tokens in the box together, explaining that I thought Emily felt a bit shy about doing it by herself, and she said she was happy to. In a pair lesson with both girls on 7th February I made sure there was a suitable opportunity to give both girls a house point each, and Emily was happy to post her token in the box with Rose. This suggests that Emily found any sort of attention solely on her uncomfortable, even without any pressure to talk, and being part of a pair reduced this feeling.

However, the most important aspect of working with a pair is the dynamics of how the two pupils interact together, and while Rose and Emily were not particularly friends in the classroom or playground, I think Rose being quietly confident, being at a very similar stage in her literacy skills, and finding the same things funny as Emily, were all important contributing factors. By the end of the second term, I was able to introduce a third pupil into our lessons, also at the same level in literacy. Emily seemed quite unsure the first time, but again it was a good mixture of personalities, as he enjoyed the role of “entertainer” and was able to get Emily giggling out loud again, whilst also being very empathetic with her.

Davies (2014) has however prompted me to realise how much my thinking about teaching and learning focused on it taking place in a one-directional, linear path between myself and my pupils: I planned and delivered my programme to them and they co-operated or not in varying degrees according to their individual personalities and circumstances. Even group work seemed to follow a similar model, with myself at the centre and the children around me radiating out like the spokes of an umbrella. In her study of a Swedish preschool, Davies (2014) gives several examples of children supporting another

pupil's learning unprompted by an adult, or offering emotional support, sometimes in unspoken warmth and understanding for emotions that adults could only dimly remember. Both the pupils who worked with Emily in our lessons seemed to accept Emily's silence, and to support her communication through gesture without any prompting, in an atmosphere of empathy and understanding. I think that Rose gained in confidence in this process too, as she and Emily both had different areas of greater skill, so both could be the one who helped the less confident one.

6.4.4. My research journal as a form of pedagogical documentation

Of all the pupils I worked with in both years of my fieldwork, I felt far less professionally confident working with Emily, both because I had little relevant experience, and also because there seemed so little advice available for the particular activities I was attempting. I found I was writing a lot in my research journal about my dilemmas, indecisions and possible improvisations, and found this was very helpful in making time and space mentally to really think through what to do next and how to do it, rather than letting vague worries circle unproductively at the back of my mind.

This process seemed to resonate very much with Lenz Taguchi (2010) thinking about what she describes as "pedagogical documentation". Lenz Taguchi (2010) starts from criticism of traditional teaching documents, on the grounds that they are often based on comparing children to what is considered "normal" for their age, to look for deficiencies that can be "corrected". She also points out that they are not the objective, almost scientific, observations that they are often seen as. Instead, they are written through the lens of the observer's own ideas and personalities, which influence both what is looked for, and what is noticed or do not. As these observations are recorded, they form a document which becomes a material-discursive agent that then influences the observing practitioner's professional thinking, in a way that is deeply entangled. This thinking has influenced my methodological thinking, as detailed previously in Chapter 4.

However, embracing the entangled nature of these processes can enable written observations to become a means to explore what new learning is happening as it unfolds. It can help to focus on possibilities for new learning, not

just for the children being observed but also for the educators themselves to develop their own professional skills and knowledge, or to be, as Lenz Taguchi writes, "*transformed in our new phenomenon of knowing and becoming with practice, which makes practice real in a new way*" (Lenz Taguchi, 2010:88). My writing about my work with Emily was transformative, not just because it helped me to further my skills as a reading teacher, especially in my understanding of how to support children who are selectively mute, but it also shed some light on how I adapted my teaching for individual children, and improvised as I went along. As the practical information I could find was written more from a speech therapy perspective of strategies to encourage children to widen the range of people or places where they were happy to talk, rather from the teaching of reading, it meant that my teaching for Emily was very much based on this improvisation. It would not have been possible for me to produce in advance a half-term plan of detailed activities for each of my sessions, because I worked by trying an activity, thinking about whether it was helpful or not, and if so how, and then using my reflections on this in my research journal to work out my next steps.

By the end of our time together, the class teacher said that Emily had made 6 points progress in her reading according to the school's assessment criteria, whereas the expected rate of progress is 4 points in a year. I think I contributed to this progress by working with Emily's literacies in a holistic way, drawing together her parents' contributions, her love of playing games, including the agency of the games, and her own desirings to be a "good reader", into an assemblage that helped Emily too in one step of her journey towards gaining her voice in school.

6.4.5. Implications for practice:

- **Finding resources that a pupil really enjoys learning can transform not only their learning but their emotional responses in school.** Playing literacy-based games to reinforce teaching points not only helped Emily to enjoy our lessons more, but getting caught up in the fun of playing them also helped to reduce her stress levels in school. These games seemed to have a real "vibrancy" (Bennett, 2010) for Emily, transforming her into a "giggling girl".

- **Focus on the learner as an individual.** I was in danger, when I first started working with Emily, of focusing too much on her selective mutism, and my lack of knowledge in dealing with it. Focusing instead on Emily herself, working with her areas of strength, and looking for next steps to develop seemed to help me find ways to boost her literacy skills and her self-confidence.

6.5. Vignette: Alicia – the enchantment of fairy tales and princesses

Alicia was the youngest pupil in my study, in the school year below the others, and still only aged five. Alicia was suggested for my study by Sue because her class teacher was very concerned about her slow progress across the curriculum, but particularly her reading skills. She had not yet securely acquired the knowledge about text that lays the foundations for decoding and reading for meaning: skills such as tracking left to right, recognising word boundaries, writing her own name correctly and hearing the sounds within words accurately.

I worked with Alicia as part of Year 2 of my fieldwork, from 24th October 2018 to 29th April 2019, and then continued to support Alicia once my fieldwork was finished as a volunteer in school until the first Covid lockdown closed school temporarily in March 2020. Most of our lessons were 1:1, but we were sometimes joined by another pupil from her class who was felt by their class teacher to be in need of a boost with their literacy confidence too. I used an individual learning plan similar to that in Appendix D as a structure for our work, using the format illustrated in Appendix C to plan out lessons. I delivered one lesson plan sometimes over several of our twenty minute sessions, as we tended to work at quite a sedate pace. In theory, we had three twenty minute sessions a week, but Alicia's school attendance was quite low at times, so even with some ad hoc juggling around of my timetable, I sometimes only managed two sessions a week. Our work together seemed to have been characterised by both strong flows of positive affect, and by my exploration of how to make literacy learning more accessible to Alicia, and I explore these below.

6.5.1. Alicia and the Three Bears

In my first lesson it became immediately clear how wide the gap was between Alicia's current literacy skills and those expected by school for her age, and the effect this was having on her confidence in herself as a learner. Her class

literacy lessons were pitched for children who could write at least one sentence using their knowledge of letter sounds in a readable, if not completely accurate way, but I discovered that Alicia only knew a few letters, and was not yet able to blend them together. The effects of this mismatch were illustrated by Alicia's different reactions to playing a memory game compared to working on literacy tasks even when I had tried to match them to her needs, as I noted later in that evening in my field journal:

24th October 2018: I remember such a different look on Alicia's face when we were playing "Kim's Game" – happy and involved. In the reading-type activities she was fiddling with things and distracted. I am going to have to do things very actively to keep her engaged.

Because Alicia was right at the beginning of learning to read, and was finding this stage very tricky, I knew I needed to go very slowly. I followed the structured dyslexia programme that I had been trained in, working slowly by adding one letter at a time, then blending these letters into small words. Each letter had a small card with its lower case and capital versions, and a picture starting with its sound as a memory cue. I used photocopiable sheets that follow this scheme, as they had lots of activities at a suitable pace, like identifying the new letter in a variety of typefaces, or choosing the letters from the targeted selection to spell a word indicated by a picture. We worked on the letters "i t p n s a" from 24th October 2018 to our last lesson of term on 6th December. We could spell out small sentences like "a pin in a tin", but nothing particularly interesting.

Figure 3: "I can see…"

In my previous school, I had been able to access reading books that had appealing stories with photo illustrations and content that would have been perfect for Alicia, but I did not have anything like that in school, so I decided that I would need to make my own as I had in the previous year. I had asked Alicia what stories she liked, and when she said the three bears, I managed to find a version that was too tricky for Alicia to read independently but which we enjoyed reading together. I then began to make my own little books and 'lotto' games, using the Three Bears story with my own text that I knew she could manage. When I had exhausted the potential

of the three bears, I had to explore more possibilities, and Alicia said that she liked Cinderella, and that she would like to make books about what she did at home, for example going to the seaside. I mastered using the school camera and "Picolage" software to make a book called "I am Alicia, I can…" with pictures of Alicia doing activities I thought she might be able to decode (I can hop, I can sit, etc). I also colour copied pictures from books that were too tricky for her to read independently to add my own text to make little books I thought she could manage with only a little support. These little books, made of one or sheets of photocopier paper, sometimes plain white or pastel pink or yellow, became really important to Alicia: I recorded in my research journal on 5th February 2019 that she had been disappointed that I had not got another little book ready, and I had had to make one quickly after the lesson to give her to take home. The materiality of these little books was useful: because they were just a sheet or two of paper Alicia could keep them at home, and did not need to remember to bring them back to school like the reading scheme books. On the 18th January 2019 Alicia told me that she kept all her three bears little books in her desk at home, which suggests they were important to her.

As Alicia continued to progress very slowly, and there was not the buzz of excitement from mastering new skills, I tried to add some interest through games, which she enjoyed, particularly those with a visual memory element, as she found these easier. We were working on developing her sight memory for some of the most commonly occurring words, with the reward of a sticker for a set of five instantly recalled, and the excerpt from my research journal describes a game quickly made from a sheet of paper for one of our few pair lessons:

29th March 2019: Alicia said she wanted to play the "big hands" game again (the "big hands" were two hand shapes on long sticks sold for swatting flies)*, so I quickly cut an A4 sheet into 16, then used some to make a "pairs" game with some of the high frequency words we are working on, and some single words to play "Who can be the first to swat…?" Alicia was still not getting "to", which we need to get her next sticker, so I picked up both "to"s, one in each hand, and did a mad "magician" impersonation, weaving both hands around, and saying: "Which one is "to"? Nobody knows which hand it's in! What does this one say?" Both children got the humour and we had a really happy lesson and so much*

fun from 1 sheet of paper and 2 fly swats! Also a lot of learning at the same time, hopefully!

By the end of my main study, Alicia had managed to read the first of the graded reading books that made up the "Benchmarking" reading assessment scheme I used to monitor reading accuracy and comprehension progress. I wrote in my journal:

29th April 2019: Alicia just read "Look at me" – properly, properly read it! She recognised the high frequency words, used the picture clues with first letter, changed the repeated pattern with the new words, and asked what the exclamation mark was! I was absolutely made up!

Working with Alicia really clarified how much children can enjoy literacy activities even when they are struggling to acquire reading skills, if activities are meaningful to them and at an appropriate level. My research diary records several instances of Alicia popping up with a big smile when she saw me coming to collect her, and skipping happily along the corridor towards the small office. It was me who was less positive (although I never let it show), with some despairing comments like *"Hard to think we will ever get there!*" in my research journal on 30th November 2018. Alicia seemed to maintain her ability to enjoy our literacy activities, even though she was much less confident in class literacy lessons, as was illustrated by the journal excerpt below:

23rd April 2019: Alicia was sitting totally still in front of a "comprehension" sheet in class with written instructions for which colour to put on which part of the picture, which she could not read. It struck me that she looked just like the mouse Moses (our cat) *had brought in this morning – frozen and unable to move a muscle.*

The mouse had been so petrified that the cat had lost interest, and my son had been able to rescue it. Alicia's stillness had struck me as having that same petrified tension as the mouse, the same desperation to remain unnoticed until danger had passed: even though the class teacher was generally very sympathetic and supportive of Alicia, she must just, in the rush to get ready for the new term, have forgotten that this activity would have been too hard for her. I knew how much Alicia loved colouring, so it was there was a double sadness

that she was not only looking so worried but also not happily colouring in with the rest of the class.

The work Alicia did with me was very different to her class literacy lessons, as I based it on her home literacy activities: she said she loved to watch Disney stories at home, like Cinderella and Frozen. On non-uniform days she would always have beautiful outfits with dresses and matching accessories like hair bows and lace trimmed socks, so she seemed to be a very "girlie" girl. The school's main reading scheme is Oxford Reading Tree, in which the main girl character is "Biff", who always wears trousers (apart from in time travelling adventures in which she is forced to wear a dress and complains bitterly) which is admirable in avoiding gender stereotyping, but may not have helped Alicia to identify with the stories. Making the little books was a very labour intensive process for me, but she really seemed enthusiastic and happy about them, so I think that they had a vibrancy (Bennett, 2010) for her that overcame her initial reluctance to struggle on with learning decoding, and helped her to develop her reading skills. This fits with the findings of a study by Nevo and Vaknin-Nusbaum (2018) which found that a combination of interactive story reading with specific instruction in literacy skills increased motivation to read and the skills to do it at the same time. I think it also allowed her "literacy desirings" (Kuby et al. 2016) to be expressed, and thus maintained.

Figure 4: Three Bears Lotto

6.5.2. "The difference is huge – everyone says so!"

Having realised in the first lesson on 4th October 2018 just how hard the first steps in reading were proving for Alicia, and how much this was impacting on her emotionally, I knew from my past experience as a reading support practitioner that I needed not only to make our literacy activities lively and engaging, as I have described in the previous section, but also to create what I thought of when I began this study as a 'good rapport', but that I now feel is better described as a strong positive flow of affect (I have discussed this in my

exploration of the literature, drawing on authors like Kathleen Stewart (2007) and Christian Ehret (2018)).

As I began working with Alicia I tried to try to focus in my reflective writing in my journal on exactly how I established a rapport with a pupil. I realised that I tuned into body language more than I had thought, to align my teaching delivery to both my pupils' learning needs and also to their affective responses, as part of building rapport:

7th November 2018: Tried to be really conscious of myself today. Realised I was constantly scanning Alicia's face to check for a smile – need to keep a smile there 80% of the time! Am using this to work out when I have to readjust what I was doing if it seemed too hard

I realised that I watched my pupils' body language carefully, looking at, for example, facial expression, posture, speed of working or direction of gaze. Some pupils are happy to give direct feedback (I have had some very useful constructive feedback quite unprompted from older pupils: I now know that I have to make sure that I do not begin to talk faster and faster, as then it becomes hard to follow what I am saying) but I still back this up with close observation of body language clues. Watching facial expression and body language can help to identify if I have hit my target of an activity that takes a bit of cognitive processing to grasp, as this suggests that links are being made to previous learning, or new ideas are being assimilated, followed hopefully by the sort of body language that indicates a 'lightbulb' moment of an idea grasped, or pride in a new skill mastered. If a pupil is reluctant to have a go at an activity I give them, I take this as feedback that I have not pitched it correctly in terms of content, and need to rethink.

When I began to look at the affective aspects of my practice, I found the term 'rapport' problematic, is it was quite vague, hard to pin down into individual elements or skills that can be built on or improved. Using the term "positive flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007) seems to be easier to work with, as it helped me to identify separate elements through which affective flows seemed to be generated, including matching the work to the pupil's learning levels, using body language cues to work out a suitable pace and atmosphere in the lesson, balancing being a little less formal than in the classroom while still maintaining

an industrious buzz, and finding some shared interests or enjoyment in a game. Positive flows are felt physically, and mismatches that generate negative flows perhaps even more so, with accompanying their accompanying tensions and withdrawals.

Pitching activities at a level where Alicia was experiencing both success and enjoyment was very important in building up a positive relationship, as well as for learning. It was easy to identify what Alicia would like, and she was always really pleased by what I had produced, plus I did really quite enjoy some pink princess activities myself (much more so than some previous pupils' interests I had worked with in the past, such as choosing maggots for fishing bait). One entry in my journal resonated with Boldt's (2019) account of flows of affect between herself and a child as they played in the sand tray, which I read at a later date, after writing this entry:

26th March 2019: Alicia had a lovely time colouring in the pictures in our homemade book – all in pink! …We had a lovely moment of companionable silence as we sat side by side at (the) desk – I was getting my coloured pencils ready sharpened for tomorrow and just thinking I would let her enjoy the colouring for a few minutes but we were united by a common bond of contentment.

In a way, the hardest thing for me sometimes was to avoid the temptation to let the happy moments of pink princess colouring take up more time than my head really knew that they should, as Alicia would look so happy, and it felt unkind to break the spell.

Boldt (2020) writes about the underestimated importance of "attunement" between practitioner and pupil, and that one element of this is aligning body language. She believes that affect can be seen as the driving force in learning and teaching situations, and writes that:

> Students and teachers in classrooms are likewise always becoming and becoming anew in relation to another, the materials and flow of energy and possibility. (Boldt, 2020:6).

Even though we had only got as far as managing the first out of thirty "Benchmarking" reading assessment texts in a term and a half, Alicia had seemed to grasp the underlying skills that would help her to progress further,

and to have gained confidence in herself as a learner, as is illustrated by this entry in my research journal:

29th April 2019: Asked Alicia's teacher later on for some feedback for the last term, and she said: "The difference is huge – everyone says so!"

6.5.3. Implications for practice:

The implications for practice from my work with Alicia seem to be:

- **Enchantment in literacy activities is both discovered and cultivated**: Enchantment is "to be transfixed, spellbound" (Bennett, 2001) by something, and can be viewed as part of the enjoyment of literacy (Burnett and Merchant, 2018a), so helping children to associate feeling enchanted with reading activities can be argued to be an important part of encouraging them to participate actively in them. Bennett comments that:

  > Enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us, but it is also a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies. One of those strategies might be to give greater expression to the sense of play… (Bennett, 2001:4)

  Bennett also adds that enchantment "is an uneasy combination of artifice and spontaneity" (Bennett, 2001:10) and I think that this describes my methods in using games to teach Alicia very aptly. Sometimes my improvisations were based on making up little lotto games or for example combining "Kim's Game" with a sorting activity with objects to discriminate between the sounds /k/ and /g/, which were planned around what I needed to teach next and made at home, but at times Alicia would say something that would trigger an idea.
- **If school literacy activities do not seem to have the potential to enchant a learner, making links with home literacies can often help:** While my teacherly instincts were still a little wary of the gender stereotypes in Disney princess stories, they were so full of enchantment for Alicia that she was happy to get involved with literacy activities based around them. Again, it is 1:1 teaching that makes this level of personalisation possible, and also enables the freedom for the improvisation based on feedback from the pupil in real time. Home

literacies can be more than just favourite stories or television programmes, they can include hobbies, cultural or community practices, and much more (Pahl, 2016).

- **“Reading” body language is a key element in the process of building rapport with pupils:** By thinking of rapport as positive flows of affect, it was easier to see how it is built not so much on a lucky chance of individuals being personally matched, but more on “tuning in” to what seemed to work best for an individual pupil, in terms of pace, content, use of language, type of activities, and finding some shared ground. All these are judged to some extent by being aware of the pupil’s body language, to pick up small cues about whether the balance is right, or if it needs adjusting quickly before it becomes a source of negative affect.
- **Listening to children builds their confidence as a learner:** As I worked with Alicia, giving her some agency in choices about the themes of our literacy activities, she seemed to gain in self-confidence. Boldt (2020) draws on her training as a child therapist as well as teacher to put the case that children who are marginalised, as Alicia was by her struggles to acquire literacy skills, can often feel unseen, and, as a consequence, that they do not matter. Listening to a pupil counteracts this by acknowledging them and showing that their thoughts and opinions matter, boosting self-esteem. Listening to a pupil also ensures that the activities are well matched in content and pace, which builds skills, and further boosts confidence.

6.6. Answering my research questions

In this chapter, I have used vignettes to explore some of the emotional experiences of both my pupils and myself during our time working together. In the next chapter, I will consider how my understanding of reading support as both a cognitive and affective process has developed, both as a result of my reading of posthumanist perspectives, and of my thinking about my work with my pupils. In Chapter 8 I will go on to consider the implications for practice.

Chapter 7. Identifying the elements that constitute the "more-than-cognitive" aspects of reading support: some key themes from my findings

In this chapter, I discuss my exploration of the elements of my practice as a reading support teacher that I have come to describe as the "more-than-cognitive", which I gradually developed as I delved deeper into posthumanist thinking. I had begun my study with the feeling that the "social and emotional" elements of support teaching were really important. However, the new perspectives afforded by the reading I have discussed in detail in Chapter 3 have helped me to understand these factors more deeply, but others too that I was less aware of, which I describe in more detail in this chapter. I begin by detailing how my identification of the "more-than-cognitive" elements did not happen through just one data analysis process, but gradually through an iterative process. I then consider the importance of the structured literacy teaching programme, which forms the cognitive element of my teaching, as the cognitive and "more-than-cognitive" seem to work synergistically together. After this, I discuss each element in more depth.

7.1. Analysing my data in three phases

My identification of the elements seemed to happen in three different phases, the first of which was prior to my formal data analysis processes. Due to changing the focus of my study while carrying out my fieldwork, I began to read posthumanist writing side by side with writing my research journal. I became more and more convinced that posthumanist thinking provided the vocabulary to describe elements of my teaching that previously I had felt, but been unable to clearly articulate. As a part of this process, I began to identify some themes, for example dis/enchantment and also the vibrancy of material objects from my reading of Jane Bennett's writing (2001, 2010); and the role of affect from Kathleen Stewart's (2007) writing.

A second phase unfolded as I read more around these ideas, I came across other authors whose thinking seemed to illuminate some more of the experiences of my fieldwork. One example is finding Burnett and Merchant's (2018a) article on the enchantment of reading, and then reading on to discover more of their ideas, for example their thinking about multi-media literacies and the social nature of literacy activities. This reading prompted me to develop

further themes, as I began to notice how these ideas were being enacted in my practice.

The final phase was rooted within the writing up of my data, using my methodological framework of diffractive ethnography (Gullion, 2018), as discussed in 4.1.7. The writing process helped to clarify my understanding of the concepts behind the themes; my dual role as agent and filter of information; and the contributions of both the human and more-than-human elements in my practice. My supervisors' comments on my developing themes also prompted fresh insights, for example about how much listening to my pupils was an important part of my practice. This was something that I had taken for granted as part of my planning processes, but I began to look back over my journal to think in more depth about the different ways in which I listened.

My findings were rewritten several times, each time with another layer of analysis, in a reiterative approach, using writing as a method, in the way I have explored previously in Chapter 5. I identified excerpts from my diary or lesson evaluations and included these to illustrate points I was discussing, to add "confirmability" (Swain 2018) to my analysis. In the end, I settled upon eleven elements: (dis)enchantment (Bennett, 2001); third spaces as "bloom spaces" (Stewart, 2010); adapting my teaching methods to build on children's interests; the social aspects of reading support; the vibrancy of resources (Bennett, 2010); the role of affect in my decision making; the role of the structured teaching programme (Hickey, 2000); assemblages of desiring; listening to children; becomings and "Personal Literacies Landscapes".

7:2. The interdependence of the cognitive and "more-than-cognitive" aspects of reading support

Although the focus of my study is the posthumanist perspectives, I remain convinced that all these "more-than-cognitive" elements had the efficacy they seemed to demonstrate because they were working synergistically with the structured teaching programme that I had been trained in as a dyslexia teacher. I relied on it to fill the gaps in my pupils' knowledge and increase their confidence in tackling literacy activities. This is known as "mixed methods" in teaching reading, as it combines teacher-led direct instruction of reading skills like phonics with child-led exploration of literature that they enjoy, and has been

found to be more effective than either method alone, for example in a longitudinal comparative study in a primary school in Finland (Tang et al, 2019) and also in an Early Years setting in Israel (Nevo and Vaknin-Nusbaum, 2018).

I think that the materiality of the structured literacy scheme (Hickey, 2000) was significant in bridging the cognitive and “more-than-cognitive” aspects of my teaching, in two ways particularly. One aspect of the dyslexia teaching on which it is based is the use of resources that can be physically manipulated and personalised, for example wooden letters for alphabet work and to make words, and packs of cue cards, one for each letter covered so far, with prompt pictures chosen and/or drawn by the learner. The growing pack of cue cards physically represents growing knowledge, which I augmented with little folders of high frequency words that can be accurately sight read, and certificates to celebrate success. It forms a way to hold and own a physical representation of growing skills and confidence. In addition, I also used multisensory memory activities from my dyslexia teaching with all my pupils, which I felt really helped them to develop focus and concentration skills, and also enabled them to make visible progress in improving their scores, thus boosting their faith in their ability to learn.

The structure of the scheme, and the resources that I have built up to accompany it, is also significant for me, especially when there seems so much that needs to be done, as it helps me to identify next steps in small chunks very easily. It also helps to identify, and focus strategies on, the points in learning decoding skills that are likely to form ‘bottlenecks’ for children who are struggling more than their peers in mastering them. Both Alicia and Ben, for example, needed quite considerable support to learn how to blend letter sounds into words, as they struggled to acquire the phonological skills to do this, whereas Rose and Emily needed support in remembering common non-phonetic letter patterns like “magic e” (known in phonics as split vowel diagraphs). At these points in particular it is very helpful to have a wide range of resources and strategies to try, as the whole class ones have not proved fully effective in overcoming these especially tricky obstacles in their progress.

However, I feel that just delivering the teaching programme strictly without modifying and personalising it would not have been as effective, and would have brought with it the risk of reifying it, as can sometimes happen with

reading schemes in schools, which I have discussed in Section 3.3.4. of my literature review. This would have the potential to give the structured teaching programme so much agency in our lessons that it assumed a personality and power, which I wanted to avoid. In order to modify and personalise the programme, I drew on the elements below, which I feel constitute the "more-than-cognitive" aspects that complement the cognitive aspects and work together with them.

7.3. (Dis)enchantment

One of the "more-than-cognitive" elements in my practice as a reading support teacher that seemed to be very important was finding a literacy activity that enabled my pupils to experience enchantment as a part of their literacy learning. The concept of the power of enchantment is drawn from Jane Bennett's (2001) thinking, which I have discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Many of my pupils seemed to be experiencing its opposite, disenchantment, in their literacy learning when we began working together. In Bennett's (2001) deeply philosophical discussion, one word runs like a thread through all her accounts of the different explanations for what she describes as the disenchantment of modern life, and that is "meaninglessness": to become disenchanted with something is to find nothing meaningful in it. If something is meaningless, she writes, there is no joy to be found in it, and therefore nothing to inspire or enliven in it (Bennett, 2001:76).

This really resonated with me when I thought about most of my pupil's initial responses to reading. It seemed to them as incomprehensible in both appeal and understanding as watching cricket matches does to me (words I am familiar with in everyday life have new meanings, the excitement of unfolding events eludes me, and my lack of understanding excludes me from my sons' shared enjoyment). Vinnie, Ben and Alicia's responses to school literacy activities had become, after falling behind the levels of both spoken and written language needed to participate fully, very similar to what mine would be if I was obliged to attend a cricket match: they had, metaphorically speaking, brought their knitting with them. If an unquestioning approach is taken to school curricula, both the formal written policies and the implicit expectations for behaviour and approaches to learning, then fidgeting, difficulty in concentrating and reluctance to engage in tasks is often seen solely as 'poor attitude' on the child's part. An

alternative view could see it as a response to finding the tasks meaningless, often due to there being too big a gap between the skills needed to tackle the tasks and those currently possessed by the pupil. Only Rose, out of all my pupils, seemed to have a positive view of reading in all situations when we began working together: I noted quite early in my time with her, on the 8th November, that she seemed to enjoy reading, and had asked for two books to take home instead of just one. She seemed, along with the rest of the class, to find enchantment in the stories used as starting points, and in reimagining and rewriting them in ways that resonated with themselves, even though she struggled to commit her ideas to paper. The others seemed to have become overwhelmed by disenchantment, which seemed to be expressed as an affective "no" (Truman et.al, 2020), and took the form of finding other things to do or think about, outside of the content of the class literacy activities.

Ways to reconnect with a sense of enchantment in literacy learning for my pupils came in many forms, identified by noticing which activities they seemed to find meaningful, joyful or inspiring. I realised that experiences which could be characterised as "momentary enchantment" (Bennett, 2001) can be really important in changing a struggling reader's perceptions of what time spent reading can be like, whether chanced upon accidentally, for example when a pupil did impersonations of characters in stories that made both of us laugh out loud together, or ones engineered purposely by choosing resources that really appeal to pupils. These moments of enchantment seem also to be characterised by steps away from a more formal pupil/teacher relationship to situations where there is less of a power differential, for example when playing literacy games with an element of chance that means I can be soundly defeated by jubilant pupils. The elements of competition and fun sharpen perception and add a little tension, which helps to develop concentration skills as well as to introduce an element of enchantment, and so I adapted existing formats to focus this concentration on spelling patterns or word recognition, depending on what we were working on. I would have liked to use IT-based reading games like "Wordshark" more, but my access to laptops as a guest in school was limited, so I was not able to use these as much as I have done previously. The other element that added enchantment seemed to be finding books and literacy activities that related closely to each child's personal interests, in a more

specific way than a whole class lesson could, using knowledge that I gained slowly from having time to work with them individually. This ranged from African animals for Vinnie, to Cinderella for Alicia, but it seemed to add not only enjoyment but also meaningfulness to reading for them.

There seems to me to be quite strong resonances between the concepts of enchantment and vitality in literacy. Boldt (2020) characterised vitality as the energy in affective flows (Stewart, 2007), and drew on Stern's (1998) work in therapy sessions, which suggested that clients whose expressions of their own vitality were unacknowledged eventually began to feel dead inside. When I was volunteering as a T.A. in whole class literacy lessons, there was a general sense of vitality for the majority of the students, which I often felt myself too, as the lessons seemed engaging for the majority, and gave opportunities for students to personalise their writing. For Vinnie and Ben in particular, though, there seemed to be much less potential for them to experience this vitality, especially as the gap widened between the skills levels needed to fully participate and their current operating levels. They both seemed to have very low levels of energy in literacy activities in school (I noted in my journal on 5th December that Vinnie's teacher had told me that she was so convinced that he was about to fall asleep in the lesson that she had had to ask him to get up and walk around to make sure he did not), and this fits with Boldt's (2020) thinking that it is participating in flows of positive affect that really energises learning in the classroom.

7.4. Third spaces as bloom spaces

For all the children, one of the biggest advantages of our 1:1 or pair lessons was having a "third space" (Levy 2008) to work in: somewhere that was still a part of school and worked on school activities, but which was separate from and a little more relaxed than a whole class situation and in which they could try out new skills and new ways of behaving (I have explored this concept more fully in Chapter 3).

Physical third spaces: I was fortunate to have the use of a small office for a lot of the teaching in my fieldwork. When we had to find odd corners in the entrance hall or staff room instead, I found it much harder to create the same sort of emotional space. The physical third space was particularly important for

Emily, because of her anxiety levels: I commented in my journal on 27th March how much more confident Emily was when we were working in the small office than when she was in the classroom. It also important for Ben, as he was away from the gaze of his classmates, and any comments about his skill levels: I noted in my journal on 12th September 2017, the first time that we worked together 1:1, how much better he concentrated in the small office than when I had been supporting him in the classroom with whole class lessons.

Emotional third spaces: Proctor (2015) wrote about children's emotional geographies within school: that there are unwritten school rules about what emotions can be expressed in different places within school, and that the uses of spaces are socially constructed. Looking back through my theoretical lenses, I realised that I had purposely set out to construct the affective tone for this space, although I did not articulate it in those words at the time. I adapted my 'teacher persona' to be a little more 'chatty' and a little less strict, in order to get to know the children better as individuals and to make them feel less stressed, but I have learnt from experience how to balance this to retain a good learning environment too. I also make it a space in which it is ok to have a go at new skills without worrying about 'getting things wrong' partly by using resources like white boards which can be cleared in seconds, and partly by talking about concepts like "learning zones". This is a term I developed in my own practice, loosely based on Vygotsky's theories of zones of proximal development (Vygotsky,1962), to explain that work has to have some challenge to produce new learning, as work that is 'easy' is only focusing on what has been learnt already. I also praise effort and perseverance, and am honest about my own mistakes and areas of difficulty. However, each child also plays their part in the construction of their own individual third space, forming an "entanglement" (Barad, 2007) in which I learn from them how to adapt my approach to suit their specific needs and preferences better, in a steadily unfolding entanglement. For all my pupils, this third space did become a "bloom space" (Stewart 2010), or, to be more conventional in terms, a space to blossom.

7.5. Adapting to individual needs: using improvisation in an emergent pedagogy to personalise learning and so build self-confidence

Whole class lessons were planned by the class teacher half a term in advance, to ensure that resources are prepared, and all the other staff involved, including myself, fully understand what is required, which I found very helpful. Working 1:1, on the other hand, offers the possibility of not necessarily having to plan ahead, but instead to be able to explore with the learner what would interest them, or what their growing skills mean that they would need to tackle next. This can be particularly important for learners who are experiencing quite complex difficulties, for whom the best approach is not immediately completely clear, as was the case for me with Emily, because I had never worked with a pupil who did not speak in school before. Being receptive to cues, both verbal and non-verbal, from pupils sheds light on what strategies or activities to try next. This process can be described as emergent, because the focus of next steps emerges as a consequence of current activities, as the practitioner reflects on the learner'(s') responses, both affective and cognitive. This makes it more possible to harness "literacy desirings" (Kuby et al 2016) as they arose, for example when I discovered how much Vinnie liked African animals and Alicia princesses, or to keep finding fresh ideas for Ben.

Teaching in this way can be exciting, as it is more creative, and results in new learning for both the teacher and the learner as new approaches are developed, in the process described by Kuby et al. (2016:27) as "teaching←→learning". It can also be a little daunting, as it involves having faith in the process of being partly led by a pupil, with the accompanying fears of being judged by colleagues as not being adequately prepared, or in control of the teaching and learning situation, whereas in reality it takes probably more confidence in both knowledge and skills as a teacher than delivering a very scripted lesson entails. This way of teaching is a key strategy to personalise teaching to individual pupil's interests and learning needs, in order to maximise every learning opportunity.

Emergent pedagogy and pupil self-confidence: Although I cannot point to a direct causal link, I feel that this way of teaching plays a key role in the increase in my pupils' self-confidence while I was working with them. I feel that adapting my teaching to include their interests helps pupils to feel valued and respected,

and to feel that they can express themselves and have some agency in the learning process, which boosts their self-confidence. An example of this is my work with Emily. I noted in my journal on 6th November 2018 that I felt that developing Emily's sense of her own agency with our lessons to be very important, which on reflection could be linked to her need to feel that she has some control particularly in areas such as who she is happy to speak to or not. This led to us making a book together about possible styles for long hair, which was at the time a nerve-wracking departure from the school literacy curriculum, as it had no definite link to schooled literacy outcomes, but did feel at the time to be important in building our relationship as well as Emily's confidence.

7.6. Working with the social aspects of reading support

I had begun by hoping to explore more about how the strength of the relationships I formed with my pupils formed a significant aspect of the "more-than-cognitive" elements of my practice. We always spent a few minutes of every lesson 'just chatting' about the weekend, or something that had happened in school, or other news, but looking back every single minute of this was well spent in building a good relationship and developing their self-esteem, as someone taking an interest in them is a form of recognition and respect for them as an individual. This links in with "third space" theory (Levy, 2007), as I developed a 'teacher persona' that was more low key than one geared to whole class teaching, still professional but slightly more empathetic and child-orientated, rather than curriculum orientated. I realised that a crucial aspect of my practice was listening to the child quite intently, rather than superficially, to ensure that all the clues that a child gives as to their interests, emotional states and the language levels that will be best processed by them are all picked up and built upon. This level of listening also enables what Boldt (2020) describes as "attunement", in which a practitioner reflects and resonates with the child's own ways of being, rather than imposing their own on the social dynamics of the relationship.

However, I was really surprised by the importance of the social relationships between the pupils, in terms of learning as well as confidence. In my previous role as a dyslexia teacher, funding used to be available for children to have 1:1 support, so that a programme could be tailored to their specific needs, and also to give a space away from peer pressure, and I came into this study with the

assumption that 1:1 was the ideal, and that 1:2 was a compromise, sometimes necessary due to time or resource constraints. I think that this held true for Vinnie, because he is a quiet person, who really did benefit from having his own space to find confidence to express his interests and find his own voice in school a little more. All the other children in the study seemed to gain more benefit from working in a pair for all or some of the time. Ben in particular seemed to dislike the intensity of focus in 1:1 teaching, and much preferred the social aspects of working with peers rather than an adult, and I think his progress was due to switching to paired rather than 1:1 working. Emily too really gained confidence to start being more proactive and relaxed once we began to play games with a peer rather than just me, especially as they co-operated together to try to beat me, although I think that the time we spent initially 1:1 laid the foundation for this in establishing trust and getting to know her a little more as an individual. While they were not particularly friends, outside of lessons, Rose was often supportive of Emily in ways that I as an adult could not be, for example when Rose was happy to help Emily gain confidence to claim “house points” (described more fully in the vignettes previously). While I worked 1:1 with Alicia most of the time, we had some lessons as a pair with another pupil from her class, which again enabled me to make the games elements of lessons more fun, adapting my plans to follow what worked well with the dynamics of the pairing.

However, the pairs have to be carefully matched: most important is a similar level of skills in the targeted activities so that self-esteem is not affected by one pupil constantly feeling that they are struggling to keep up, or alternatively getting bored or dismissive of the other because the work is not challenging enough, both of which are intensified in a pair rather than group situation. The other factor is the social dynamics between the two pupils: being friends already is not so important, but being happy to work together in a supportive and productive way is vital. Rose and Emily seemed to have that relationship, as illustrated above, and also Ben and his peer, and I scaffolded (Vygotsky, 1962) and encouraged the development of these relationships in my interactions in the lessons.

7.7. Vibrancy of resources

Another theme that runs through my work with all my pupils is that of finding the right resources for that pupil. My resources seem to fall into one of three categories for pupils: “irritating”, when I have tried things that are too complex or boring, “useful” when they can see that they are helpful but they are not particularly enthusiastic about them, and what Bennett (2010) describes as “vibrant”: things that are not just inanimate but which have “quasi forces” within them that have the potential to influence the outcome of events, feelings or thoughts. Resources that are “vibrant” for a pupil have the potential to excite, enthuse and motivate them, but I also found that they could lead me in a path of “enacted agency” (Kuby et al 2016) where I followed their potential to help a child learn, as they become part of an entanglement with the child and myself. An example of this is Alicia and her ‘little books’, which I gradually used more and more, as I experimented with different content. Exactly how much Alicia enjoyed reading and owning the little books is illustrated by my journal entry of 5th February, when I wrote about making one really quickly on the spot because Alicia had been so disappointed that she did not have a new one to take home.

For Ben, Emily and Rose, the interactive, social aspects of games seemed to have the most vibrancy, and particularly their ability to influence the social dynamics of a teaching situation. In this study, I had limited access to more multimodal resources, but in my previous practice I often found that the computer reading and spelling game “Wordshark” often had the level of vibrancy that could reverse the disenchantment of many pupils, and for Vinnie it was his tablet at home that sparked his love of animals, as it enabled him to watch documentaries about them.

A crucial aspect of a resource’s vibrancy lies in its materiality. With Alicia’s handmade little books, it mattered that they were pink and ‘princess-y’, but it also mattered that they were made from a couple of pieces of photocopier paper, so that they could be taken home by Alicia and kept in her desk for as long as she wanted them, and used in her play at home, without any worries about keeping them safe or returning them to school at the expected time. When I adapted board games, the physicality of the dice was really important: the fact that it was a cube with a different number on each face meant that it could be rolled a short distance, and then would stop with an unpredictable

number face up, was crucial in making a level, but exciting, playing field for the children to compete against me, or each other (sliding, rather than rolling, the dice was banned, as was rolling it under furniture, and then 'finding' it with the desired number uppermost!).

7.8. Working with what affect can make happen

Looking back through the lens of posthumanist thinking, I think that many of the times when I made decisions about what to do next in my teaching according to what I thought of at the time as 'intuition' or my 'teacher's instinct', I was, more accurately, attending closely to the flow of affect between the pupil or pupils and myself. I noticed that I paid attention to the flows and intensities of affect for two main reasons: to help me to match the lesson contents more closely to each pupil's individual needs, and to build positive relationships, especially when these did not easily arise naturally, and in this way flows of affect are a key component of the "more-than-cognitive" of reading support.

Ideally, each lesson formed an assemblage, in which the separate parts, including time, space, relationships, resources and emotions, came together to feel like more than their sum. However, getting all the separate elements right, so that they formed an assemblage that felt like *something* (Stewart, 2007), rather than just a list of activities that needed working through, was not always straightforward. When I began my work with each of the children in the study, I made my best guess to start with, based on my initial assessment of their current levels of skills and knowledge, and initial 'getting to know you' chats. Then I paid attention to the flows of affect between the children, the activities and myself to see if the flows felt positive or there were currents of tension or unwillingness. I built on this to adjust the work, to help me boost positives, and reverse negatives, until I could feel a positive flow of energy and happiness that really seemed to inspire the pupil to really engage with the activities, and gave me the confidence that I was pursuing the correct approaches.

Sensing flows of affect (Stewart 2007) was also important in helping me to build relationships with my pupils. This was an easy process with some pupils, particularly with Alicia, because she really enjoyed the 1:1 teaching situation, and finding activities that she enjoyed was very straightforward. There was

often a very comfortable feeling of what Boldt (2020) describes as attunement, as I described in my research diary:

26th March 2019: Alicia had a lovely time colouring in the pictures in our homemade book – all in pink! …We had a lovely moment of companionable silence as we sat side by side at (the) desk – I was getting my coloured pencils ready sharpened for tomorrow and just thinking I would let her enjoy the colouring for a few minutes but we were united by a common bond of contentment.

This resonated for me with a time Boldt (2019) writes about, when she connected with a traumatised child in her therapy practice without using words, but instead by the flow of affect happening between them once she had found the shared activity that spoke to his emotional state at the time. This sort of settled feeling that does not need constant verbal communication seems to me to be the optimum way to boost learning, as it seems to increase self-confidence in the learners, and also to create emotional space to fully concentrate on learning. Trying to sense flows of affect was particularly important when I was working with Emily because she did not talk in school, and I therefore had no verbal feedback. Picking up affective flows of anxiety and stress from Emily helped to empathise with her, and to remember that she really felt that she could not speak, as well as helping to understand more about ways to relate to her and to work round her not wanting to speak out loud in school.

Another aspect of affect in my fieldwork is the way in which the intensities and flows affected me too. Sometimes there were real moments of shared joy, either when I was enjoying taking part in the activities as much as the children were, for example playing games, or when we made a really significant step forward in skills, and both myself and the child felt equally proud and elated. At other times, when children were expressing emotions like frustration, irritation, anxiety or reluctance, which I knew intellectually were the result of trying to fit into a system that was not flexible enough to meet their needs, it was hard not to feel quite upset by being drawn into the stressful affective flows of these painful emotions, and to feel it as partly a personal rejection. In roles like counselling or play therapy, practitioners have regular debriefing sessions to talk through the impact of their work on their own emotional life, but there does feel in teaching that there is a pressure to live up to the message of the “best teacher in the

world" mugs, to have a vocation, and to always be 'wonderful', with much less space to acknowledge that while teaching can sometimes be exhilarating and joyful, it can at other times also be draining and difficult.

7.9. Assemblages of desiring.

Despite their initial disenchantments with school literacy activities, all my pupils still had within them still the desire to be readers: even Ben, who I record declaring on our first meeting (11th September) that he did not like reading and was no good at it, began to be pleased with his increasing skills levels, and a few months later was beginning to volunteer to read (on 13th December he put his hand up when Sue asked who would like to read with me). Kuby et al (2016) wrote about assemblages of desiring, in which materials, space, time and people intra-act to form "literacy desirings", and I feel that all of them had discovered literacy activities that they found inspiring as well as achievable, and generally enjoyed reading more, as well as finding it easier. Kuby et al (2016) also focus on "becomings", in that we are all growing and changing as we intra-act with other people and materials, and that our identities are also changing and developing in that process. I could see how all my pupils changed not only their ways of being readers, but also sometimes their ways of being members of the class too. Ben had a particularly marked change: he went from his initial perception of himself as "no good at" reading, to, by 5th June, looking up from his book (Oxford Reading Tree's "The Secret Room") and saying: "I can read this with no help!" He was also taking pride in being kind and polite in lessons, as well as participating much more cheerfully, which the class teacher attributed to his increased self-confidence. Vinnie too seemed to find a confidence in himself as a member of class, as well as in his reading skills.

This leads me to conclude that my role as a reading support teacher was not to motivate my pupils to want to read, but instead to remove the barriers that were preventing their literacy desirings (Kuby et al 2016), their own internal drive to engage in the world of stories and texts, from being expressed. The barriers facing the children in my study seemed to arise from a system that lacked flexibility to meet the needs of those who faced the greatest difficulties in learning to read. These learners seemed to flourish when I was able to personalise their reading support in an individualised programme, which I was able to deliver as a volunteer with far fewer time constraints than the paid

school staff. Once I had identified the step size and order for the cognitive aspect of my literacy intervention, and found some resources that seemed to have a vibrancy for that particular learner, they all seemed happy to engage in literacy learning without me having to do any specific motivation-boosting activities.

Time did seem to be a crucial element in this entanglement, and as a volunteer I had more time than school staff often do, to spend on giving individual pupils space to voice their opinions and wishes. Not being tied to a pre-set programme of work meant that I could spend more time consolidating skills and building confidence if I felt it was important, rather than feeling I needed to move on quickly. I have found in my practice that although it seems counter-intuitive to go back a few steps and proceed very slowly, when a pupil is already a long way behind their peers, the confidence they build in this process results in faster gains in the long run, albeit with no guarantees about when, and how fast, this will occur. Christian Ehret (2018) wrote about time having variable textures, and providing a pocket of calm and generous time is a crucial "more-than-cognitive" element of my reading support practice, not only for building relationships, but also for building my pupils' trust in me as their teacher.

7.10. The many ways of listening to children

Listening to my readers seemed to happen on several different levels with all the children in the study. I listened to them read in the traditional manner, listening for what they had read accurately or not. I was able to adapt this for Emily, as her Mum was happy to complete a "running record", in which a tick is given for each word read accurately, and a record is made of everything else to enable analysis of skills to work on, which enabled me to 'hear' Emily remotely. I was also listening to what they knew already and what they needed to know next, to inform my next steps in teaching them how to read. I was additionally listening to each child's emotional response and the flow of affect between us, in order to build a supportive relationship, and to be able to work out if they had emotional issues caused by their reading difficulties or not, and if so, what they might be and how I might help with them. Davies (2014) described this process as "emergent listening", when what is heard is taken on board by the listener to expand their own ways of knowing and being. I had realised prior to this study that I learnt more about the craft of teaching with every pupil I supported, but I

think that the concept of emergent listening explains the mechanism of how this happens. I think I learnt more from the pupils I had to struggle harder to listen to very carefully: Emily, because I had had no previous experience of working with a child who did not speak at all in school, and Ben because the challenge to engage him was particularly difficult, and I had to be more creative in developing new strategies.

Davies (2014) also pointed out how much of young children's communication is embodied (probably more than with older children and adults as their language skills are still developing), and I realised in the course of this study that I relied on responding to my pupils' body language a lot more than I had realised. Within the context of power relations in school, it is often hard for pupils to openly say no to adults, but behaviours like Vinnie's daydreaming, or Ben's chatting about other things or fidgeting are clear signals that the task in hand is not engaging the pupil, and a 1:1 setting gives the opportunity to explore and remedy the causes of the mismatch, rather than just focusing on the stopping the resultant behaviours, particularly those that distract other learners. Listening to body language was also very important with Emily and Alicia, because Emily used gesture as her main way to communicate, and Alicia sometimes struggled to express herself in words. I had to be especially observant with Emily, as her worries about communicating in public seemed to extend to non-verbal communication, as she made the smallest possible gestures, and her Mum told me (in a conversation I recorded in my journal on 26th November) that they believed Emily tried as much as possible not to smile when she was not at home.

Boldt (2020) wrote that the reciprocity involved in literacy vitality is not just cognitive but "polymodal", including attunement in elements such as rhythm, speed, intensity and movement, and these can often be built up in a variety of activities in a 1:1 setting. However, this can be quite a demanding process to be a part of, because tuning in to another person's body language can mean that you, to some extent, feel the feelings they are feeling at that time: I noted in my journal on 9th November 2018 that it felt a bit like having a permeable skin. However, it does seem to me to be a very important part of building up good relationships, particularly when children are feeling very stressed in literacy activities in school, as it helps to identify the activities which they find less

stressful, and that they are therefore happier to engage with, helping to lay the foundations emergent teaching methods, as discussed previously. It also helps to understand how the levels of stress may be affecting their approaches to literacy activities, which are then having consequences in terms of how they behave in school, which then in turn can be judged negatively as 'poor choices', if these links are not understood. This is illustrated by Ben's reluctance to accept reading support: the T.A. who worked with him in the preceding year told me on 18th January 2018 that she had struggled all year to get him to engage with anything, and as a consequence the gap between his reading skills and his peers had become even wider, in a vicious circle.

7.11. Recognising and celebrating becomings

The discourse that brings pupils into my orbit as a reading support practitioner is that of attainment gaps, difficulties and additional needs, but a key strategy is to replace this with an alternative discourse of growing in skills and confidence, and noticing and celebrating every achievement, even if it might seem small in the context of the school age related expectations. One aspect of this is to focus on steady development in building literacy skills in a structured way, based on the literacy support intervention. I use several different methods to track and celebrate growing reading skills and knowledge, for example earning certificates for learning to sight read the most commonly occurring English words, or going up the levels in the "Benchmarking" reading assessment booklets, which shift the emphasis from what each learner 'can't do' to what they can now do. In this way, each child can see how they are gradually becoming a more confident and skilled reader.

However, there were also points in our time working together that could be seen more as "becomings", in the sense defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). They write that "becomings" are rhizomatic: they happen unexpectedly, produced by different elements coming together in an assemblage, creating something new. This seems most aptly represented to me by the brief assemblage that was formed in the corridor by the endangered animals wall display, my ignorance of pangolins, and Vinnie's home literacies of wildlife documentaries. This assemblage produced "Vinnie, the class wildlife expert", who was confident and knowledgeable, and keen to engage with texts in school about wild animals. This "becoming" boosted Vinnie's confidence as a learner,

including of reading, and he made a bigger jump in his progress in reading than I could have expected by just working through the cognitive skills methodically.

At the same time, I can also see how I had my own “becomings” both as a practitioner and as a researcher. Over my career as a reading support practitioner, I feel that I have gradually acquired experience and developed strategies in the more conventional, developmental, sense of becoming a more competent teacher. My time with Emily, on the other hand, seems to me to be more of a “becoming”, because I found myself in a teaching situation I had never experienced before, and I had to work out, with Emily’s input too, how to adapt my teaching. All the suggestions I found in my preliminary reading about children who did not speak in school were based on being able to hear them read indirectly, if a child is happy for recordings to be made at home, or in the more common context of a child who will speak to peers in school but not to adults, by overhearing reading to a peer. I was really surprised by how much it was possible to adapt my normal routines (which I write about in more depth in Emily’s vignette), and the extent to which it was possible to communicate without spoken words, plus also how much I depended on verbal feedback from my pupils to know I was on the right lines both cognitively and non-cognitively. This changed my perceptions of myself as a practitioner as well as adding to my skills in unexpected ways.

Another “becoming” was my encounter with posthumanist thinking. Not only did I find a framework that helped me to feel more confident in myself as a researcher, because it opened up ways to explore my research questions that felt full of possibilities, but it also boosted my own self-confidence. I had long been aware that I had a slightly unconventional way of thinking about the world, but not encountering anyone else who seemed to think in a similar way had resulted in me feeling “odd”. Finding a whole body of work that resonated with my own ways of being felt very much like a personal new “becoming”.

7.12. Working with a learner’s “Personal Literacy Landscape”

When I began my PhD journey, the idea of ‘reader identity’ was important for me, because I had often worked with pupils who saw themselves as being ‘no good at reading’, which then became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it discouraged them from further engaging with literacy learning. At that time, I saw ‘reading

identities' as being externally observable, and to some extent measurable, but not immutable, as my aim was to replace the negative ones with more positive identities as a reader. However, as I began to read more and more about posthumanist thinking, and apply this to my practice as a literacy support teacher, I realised that the concept of 'reader identity' did not sit well with this way of thinking. I did not immediately alight upon anything more satisfactory until I read Jessica Gullion's (2018) book on diffractive ethnography, which I have discussed earlier in Chapter 4.1.7. Two particular ideas seemed to jump out and become entangled with each other, and my previous thinking, to give me a new perspective on reader identity.

Gullion (2018) discussed Bennett's (2010) application of her thinking about the vibrancy of matter to the food we eat. Bennett wrote that we tend to see food as a passive entity that we choose and consume, whereas she points out that the food we eat has a strong agency on our bodies. It can, on the one hand, provide us with energy and nutrients to promote health, but, on the other hand, can also have the potential to negatively affect our health and happiness, through poor nutrition or food that is 'off'. In addition, our choices of food are also linked to our positioning of ourselves in society, for example signifying our social status or religious or political affiliations. As I thought about this, I realised that we could be considered as consuming texts in very much the same way: we perceive ourselves very much as in control, conscious of what we do or not choose to read, but we are often much less conscious of how what we have read affects us. What we read has the potential to affect us cognitively, in terms of ideas and learning, emotionally by making us feel a range of emotions from laughter to depression, and even physically, guiding us to make choices about our safety or health. Our reading choices also impact upon how others perceive us, or how we hope to be seen. This for me resonated with Deborah Brandt's (2001) views on the links between reading and identity:

> What people are able to do with their reading or writing in any time or place – as well as what others do to them with reading and writing – contribute to their sense of identity, normality, possibility. (Brandt, 2001:11)

and also with Lenz Taguchi's (2010:121) thoughts on the often unrecognised links between learning and identity, which I have quoted previously on p.57.

The second idea that struck me from Gullion's (2018) book was her description of identity from a posthumanist point of view. She wrote that one of the implications of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas is a shift from thinking about identity towards thinking of assemblages. Assemblages, she continued, are about becomings, movement, and folding and unfoldings (Gullion, 2018:107). This suggested to me that our reading identity could be seen instead as an assemblage of all the different texts we read, whether consciously, or in the case of environmental text sometimes unconsciously, and the emotions and thoughts that these texts engender. As an assemblage, this would not be fixed, but continuously evolving, weaving together for example childhood memories of stories, recreational reading, religious or spiritual texts, work reports, adverts and many more, drawing on theories of multiple literacies (Street 1997). The assemblage may also include other people, in the form of those who have influenced or assisted literacy learning or choices, described by Brandt as "literacy sponsors" (Brandt, 2001). This seemed to tie in with Burnett and Merchant's (2018b) work on "literacy-as-event", in which they emphasise the role of affect and materiality in our literacy encounters, as they come together to form something that is fluid and full of potential.

Gullion (2018) wrote that assemblages can be mapped, and a map indicated the possibility of a landscape. This concept seemed to tie in with the work of several authors who explore the links between literacies and landscapes, for example Scollon and Scollon's (2003) work on geosemiotics, in which the language we see all around us can be seen as constituting a linguistic landscape, and Hargreave's (2000) work on emotional landscapes. In addition, Barton and Hamilton (2012) also wrote about the way in which literacies are situated in localities, and are shaped by these contexts. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described literacies as mappings too, rather than as tracings, emphasising the depiction of possible connections and journeys, rather than a definitive picture of what something "is".

This thinking has led me to suggest that we could ourselves as not having a 'reading identity', but instead a unique "Personal Literacies Landscape". The metaphor of a landscape seemed apt because it could include a range of features and terrains that have different textures and functions: frenetic, dense urban areas; cool, calm green spaces; or noisy, productive industrial

complexes. These different terrains can be linked in a variety of ways, from meandering footpaths, to main roads that shoot off in different directions to link with completely different landscapes. Landscapes change in time as some areas are developed and others become less well used, and the same happens with our unique Personal Literacies Landscapes, as our lives unfold, and our situations change.

I began to think about the ways in which the many different literacies that all readers, not just beginner readers, engage with can exert an agency through many different aspects of their lives, not just in their intellectual lives. I also began to wonder if this exists more than we as readers are consciously aware of, as this is not often talked about. As a consequence, I wondered whether there is an existing vocabulary to fully describe them, or if we might need to consider new terms to describe some of our more emotionally based literacies. Some suggestions are:

- “self-authoring” literacies”: the texts we construct to present a view of ourselves to the world. How these texts are read by others can then impact upon how they see us, and therefore how they act towards us, which can then influence many other areas in our lives.
- “literacies of belonging”: relational literacies (Burnett and Merchant, 2018b) are often part of belonging to groups. We use literacy activities as part of belonging to groups in many different ways, including shared religious texts in worship, book clubs, contributing to interest groups by joining online forums or passing down stories from our cultural heritages. These are in contrast to:
- “private literacies”: some of our literacy practices are so intensely personal that we can sometimes literally keep them under lock and key, in the shape of journals with a lockable clasp.
- “literacies of obligation”: often texts are divided into those that are read for pleasure, often fiction, and those for information, but I feel that this is a slightly disingenuously rosy view of literacies. In addition, there are also many literacy activities that are undertaken entirely of because external compulsion, with no guarantee of enjoyment or interest, for example completing paperwork.

This concept of “Personal Literacies Landscapes” was built upon thinking from scholars working from different theoretical perspectives, but in this way gives a much fuller consideration of a wider range of the different elements that all contribute in their individual ways. It draws upon explorations of the social aspects of literacies, for example Barton and Hamilton’s (2012) highlighting not only of the myriad ways in which literacies of many different kinds form part of everyday lives, but also how much our passions in life, and our literacies, intersect. In addition, it builds upon Pahl’s (2014) consideration of children’s literacy practices at home, and how these differed from those in school. Feminist new materialist thinking prompted consideration of the role played by material aspects of literacies, including not only the work of Jane Bennett (2010) as already mentioned, but also of Karen Barad (2007) and Pacini-Ketchabaw and colleagues (2017). In addition, it also draws upon ideas developed by other scholars working from a posthumanist perspective, for example Nathan Snaza’s (2019) “Animate Literacies”, which explored in depth how literacies can impact on both individuals and society, the work of both Boldt (2013) and Burnett and Merchant (2018) on the affective aspects of reading, whether in books or digital texts, and Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave’s (2017) illustration of the agency texts can have when they lamented that one of their children had begun to see themselves as a letter (“I am a K”) due to the importance of their position on the structured reading scheme in their classroom. Also in this tradition is Lenters’ (2019) discussion of the ways in which children, especially those who did not find school literacy activities particularly easy, might approach literacy tasks in ways their teachers did not expect, and Thiel’s (2015) exploration of how children’s own self-directed play could be argued to be a form of embodied literacy, as they composed and acted out stories about their favourite characters. In this way, the concept of “Personal Literacies Landscapes” is based in a flat ontology that considers the social and cognitive human elements of literacies, but on a much more level playing field with the consideration of the more-than-human, in the shape of material objects, time and space, ideas and flows of affect.

Considering learners’ “Personal Literacies Landscapes” seems significant for my practice as a reading support teacher in three main ways. Firstly, I have found that it is particularly helpful to consider how the literacy activities I do with

my pupils are connected to, or disconnected from, all the other sorts of literacy learning that I can discern in their lives at home or in school. This includes both formal literacy activities, at school or home (for example learning a new language to access religious texts), or informal, perhaps in the form of favourite stories or reading about interests (Pahl, 2014). Working to find literacy activities that fit well with home literacies or interests is very useful in making learning support activities more interesting for learners. Secondly, it has helped me to think about the affective elements of finding learning to read challenging in a much wider way than just the challenges involved having potential to cause emotional distress for the pupil. It has highlighted how this internal emotional distress can affect relationships in the classroom, engagement with other activities, and bring a weaker sense of belonging to the classroom community. Thirdly, "Personal Literacies Landscapes" has broadened my understanding of the many different ways that children engage with literacy activities beyond the classroom ones, and the range of responses that this generates, from Rose feeling adventurous reading her chapter books, to Vinnie dreaming of being a zoo keeper while he watches the wildlife documentaries, or Alicia reading to her toys at home. As it is not possible, of course, to fully know the internal life of another, there are probably many more ways in which the children I worked with intra-acted with texts and stories that were meaningful to them, and contributed to their ways of being in the world, and their relationships with others.

In my study, I have taken a different approach to working with the knowledge I gained from thinking about "Personal Literacy Landscapes" with each of the children. Rose seemed to have a disconnection between her home and school literacy that worked well for her. In school, she seemed to be content to be a "blue book reader" in the school graded reading scheme, but remained sure that she could be any sort of reader she wanted to be at home. I think Rose found my lessons helpful, as I did not record any instances of her being reluctant to engage with any activity, and she was the only one of my pupils who spontaneously noticed and asked about features of text (for example that "ou" and "ow" could make the same sound, on 16th November 2018), but her home reading seemed much more vibrant for her. I think the fact that the books she was reading at home were 'chapter books' was very significant: they were not the thin school reading scheme text with lots of pictures, but very 'grown up'

books, with chapter headings, lots of words, and a solid square spine. She seemed to have chosen them herself, in contrast to school, where you were given the next book on the list. The ability of these books to make Rose feel adventurous, as described in the previous chapter, as well as a feeling like a competent reader, seemed to help her in boosting her self-confidence. Maintaining this equilibrium by not imposing my "teacherly" stance of her chapter books being too hard for her to read independently seemed to be my priority with Rose.

For some of my other pupils, on the other hand, a disconnect between home and school literacies seemed to be creating a barrier to their literacy learning, because they had quite specific literacy interests that did not seem to be engaged by most of the school literacy learning activities, which remained very much "literacies of obligation", that they were reluctantly contending with. With Vinnie, it was his huge passion for, and knowledge of, wild animals (described earlier in the preceding chapter) which I was able to tap into both by talking to him about his interest, and also by finding books that were linked but easy enough for him to tackle independently. Having the opportunity to show off his knowledge about wild animals seemed to boost his confidence in general, as he was able to take on the role of the class wild animals 'expert'. For Alicia too, linking our literacy activities to her play life at home of pink princess and fairy tales seemed to help her to feel more confident with, as well as interested in, the activities I made to develop her literacy skills. Bringing some of the joy she experienced at home with her dolls and Disney stories on the tablet, often including music and animation too, into our literacy support work help her to be happy to engage with it. For both these two learners, finding a way to connect home and school literacies formed a bridge which helped to infuse school literacy activities with some of the positive feelings that they experienced in their home literacy worlds.

For Ben, however, I feel that it was the impact that he feared his literacy difficulties might have on how his peers viewed him that was a crucial aspect of his "Personal Literacies Landscapes", in turn impacting on his feelings about literacy learning, which seemed to be a very strong feeling of begrudged obligation. In a primary school, both the quantity and quality of a child's writing output is usually a matter of public knowledge, as everyone on their table, or

passing by the table, can see whether they have written a couple of sentences or a couple of pages, and the whole class will be aware of whether they receive public praise for written work rarely or often. Even though it is not directly mentioned, the quantity and quality of written work nevertheless still ‘speaks’ of a child’s levels of ability in class learning. Although it varied from day to day, the general trend for Ben seemed to be that as his skills increased, and his ‘visible’ literacies gained in quality, his reluctance decreased a little. The social aspects of literacy seemed much more important for Ben than any other aspect, as I never managed to find a form of text that he enjoyed, but he did seem to really enjoy playing the reading game “SWAP”, especially when he could play in a team with another child against me.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I consider the potential this thesis has to contribute in different ways. Firstly I describe my three original contributions to knowledge: the "more than cognitive" aspects of learning to read, the making explicit of my implicit knowledge as a reading support teacher, and my concept of "Personal Literacies Landscapes". Secondly, I examine how undertaking this study has impacted on myself as a practitioner, particularly as I moved from a more cognitively based understanding of acquiring reading skills towards viewing literacies through a posthumanist lens. I then explore ways in which the knowledge developed in this thesis may be of practical help to fellow practitioners working in reading support, and for literacy learning more generally. I conclude with some ideas for further areas of research that this thesis may suggest.

8.1. The original contributions to knowledge in this thesis

This thesis outlines three different original contributions to knowledge:

One original contribution to knowledge is the concept of the "more than cognitive" aspects of learning to read. Ideas taken from posthumanist thinking are used to explore a fuller picture of support teaching practice, to highlight the "more-than-cognitive" aspects that are intrinsically entwined with the much more widely written about cognitive skills. This conceptualisation was built upon posthumanist thinking such as Jane Bennett's work on enchantment (2001) and the vibrancy of material things (2010); Kathleen Stewart's (2007) work on affect, and those who translated these ideas into a teaching context, for example Lenz Taguchi (2010), Christian Ehret (2018) and Burnett and Merchant (2018a&b); plus Karen Barad's (2007) work on the agency of the material world and the ontological implications of this approach. I have combined this reading with close observation of what seems to me to be happening in my literacy support teaching with the five children in this study. Through this process, I have identified how much I worked with flows of affective intensities, embodied learning, and the agentic possibilities of time, space and material objects, which all seem to be particularly important when supporting children who are finding learning to read more difficult than their peers. I had been intuitively aware of these factors when I began my study, but was less able to identify them, as I

lacked a satisfactory vocabulary to describe them at that time. In this process, I have endeavoured to distil from the sometimes abstract and complex posthumanist thinking those ideas which will be practical and useful, and which will enrich classroom literacy practices.

Secondly, I have strived to make explicit my implicit knowledge as a reading support teacher, particularly in exploring the potentialities of working 1:1 to offer bespoke teaching to meet the needs of children who find learning decoding skills particularly difficult. I have explored how I adapted not only the structured literacy teaching programme to meet each individual's learning needs, but also the relational and affective aspects of the intervention too. In this process, I came to doubt the conventional view of the priorities for children who are struggling to learn decoding: that is, if decoding is causing the problems, then cracking the alphabetic code to master decoding will then ensure that the emotional impact of the struggle will therefore go, as a consequence. Instead, I have raised the possibility that the priority is to provide literacy experiences that give opportunities for learners to feel competent as literacy users, and that build on their own interests. I have given some illustrations in this thesis of how, once these are in place, both confidence and decoding skills develop much more readily than they had before, which I feel makes an original contribution to knowledge in this field.

A third original contribution to knowledge is my concept of "Personal Literacies Landscapes", which considers how the literacies we engage with shape not just our thoughts, but also create a rich contouring of relational and affective moments, which are continuously unfolding and emerging. This concept draws upon a range of theoretical perspectives, including Jane Bennett's (2010) thinking on the vibrancy of material objects, but also draws on Burnett and Merchant's (2018) ideas about relational literacy, Pahl's (2014) consideration of materialising literacies, Hargreave's (2000) work on emotional landscapes and Scollon and Scollon's (2003) thinking about linguistic landscapes. This has been relevant to my work as a reading support teacher, as it helps to see literacy activities in school as just one of many other literacy events a child engages with, and to explore how school literacies may or may not be connected to other literacies in a child's life. This then enables me to personalise the support I deliver more closely to the pupils' needs and interests

also helps to identify the affective flows created by literacy activities, and how connections and affective flows can be built on to develop reading skills.

8.2. How my thoughts about myself as a practitioner have changed

The biggest change I have noticed in myself over the course of doing this study is that I have become far more overtly critical of many of the pressures brought to bear on schools, particularly to be results driven and performative. It is probably a self-protective measure, when working full-time in school, to push such ideas to the back of the mind and focus on what can be done in the present for the children immediately in front of you, as this is the only available way to be able to make any sort of difference. In a way, belonging in a school is akin to belonging to a second family, and focusing on the positives rather than the negatives is very important to preserving individual mental health, as perfection in any sort of family setting will always be elusive. As I gradually gained confidence in my role as a 'researcher', I also gradually lost some of my pragmatism, although I feel that this understanding of how school staff have to operate within the system they find themselves, rather than how they would ideally like to teach, and also how pressures of workload and (sometimes unobtainably) high expectations can occasionally affect judgement is very useful in educational research.

I have gained a huge number of new insights into how I made decisions on what initially felt to me to be 'just intuition', generating learning in a process I was only able to articulate as a little bit of 'magic'. In the course of my research, I learnt a new vocabulary to describe elements of these phenomena, for example "flows of affect" (Stewart, 2007), intra-actions and entanglements (Barad, 2007) and the agency of material (Bennett, 2010). These concepts helped me to understand how I took pedagogical decisions based on input that was sensed as well as cognitively processed. Just as I was finishing writing this thesis, Candace Kuby and Jennifer Rowsell published an article in which they suggest a new possible methodology in which posthumanist and feminist new materialist theories are combined, including MacLure's (2020) writing about divination (see Chapter 5 above), Barad's (2007) work on spacetimemattering and Stewart's (2010) concept of bloom spaces (see section above) (Kuby and Rowsell, 2021). Combining these theories again with ideas from Elizabeth Gilbert's book about creativity, entitled "Big Magic" (Gilbert, 2015), they

developed the term “magic(al)ing”, which they describe as a way of exploring entanglements that are “unknown, unseen but felt and embodied” (Kuby and Rowsell, 2021:3). Perhaps after all, a little bit of ‘magic’ can be considered a satisfactory explanation for my pupils’ sometimes unexpected leaps in learning, but only now that I can give some sort of reckoning of the elements that enable this to happen?

One consequence of these new insights is that I have become less ‘teacher-centric’ in my approach to teaching, which I have found quite liberating, as I have realised that it is possible to work with the agency of pupils and of potentialities of time, space and material objects, rather to feel I must control them by sheer willpower. Seeing pupil agency as a much more positive force to work with, has decentred for me the role of ‘good behaviour management’ skills, foregrounding instead the importance of ‘good relationships management’.

A second consequence is that I am now more convinced than I was before I began my research that 1:1 (or 1:2) literacy support is beneficial for those children who find acquiring literacy skills exceptionally difficult, especially when this support builds on the possibilities of 1:1 contexts to adapt learning very closely to individual needs and interests, and to build strong relationships. I have come to the conclusion that my intuitive approach to purposely including affective elements in my teaching strategies, for example building rapport, boosting self-esteem and adding elements of fun and enjoyment, was not just the ‘sugar coating’ that made the ‘real work’ easier to swallow, but was rather a part of the core of the ‘real work’ itself. However, I still feel that this is predicated upon a good balance with the technical teaching of decoding skills, so that the children made visible progress in their own eyes with their skills, and that these two aspects of 1:1 support are synergistic rather than complementary. Although this sounds as if I may be side stepping self-criticality, when I look back with hindsight there are aspects I would have done differently, particularly how much I sometimes read some of the children’s negative emotional responses to their difficulties to mean that I was failing in my teaching skills. While I think I managed not to let this show externally too much, I caused myself a lot of internal emotional pain, due to my own lack of self-confidence.

8.3. Implications of this study for literacy learning.

8.3.1. The materiality of the literacy resources a pupil works with in class speaks to their peers and teachers of the sort of literacy learner they are considered to be.

Even when school staff work assiduously to not draw attention verbally to a learner's perceived literacy abilities, so many of the material aspects of the literacy activities inevitably still do so. This can take the form of the number/letter/colour on a reading scheme book that indicates progress (or lack of it) through the levels of difficulty, the centimetres of written text produced, the seat at the table with additional adult support, or the differentiated tasks. For children of all levels of ability, this can reduce them, as Bridges-Rhoads and van Cleave (2017) lamented, to "being" the letter or number on the reading scheme. For a child who is aware that they are falling behind their peers, this material evidence can be particularly painful. It is important to bear in mind that learners like Ben in my study, who are reluctant to engage with reading support, may be instead reluctant to position themselves in this way as struggling learners. However, there are ways to break the links between literacy resources and ability levels, as have been described earlier in this thesis.

8.3.2. The materiality of literacy resources might have unexpected agency in teaching and learning situations.

Material resources can, as Hackett (2021) comments, have the potential to be "subversive", in that they can influence the outcomes of teaching and learning situations in unexpected ways. This can be problematic, but also serendipitous, producing unexpected benefits, as illustrated by the example of the usually silent Emily giggling out loud when playing a game. Adding in more material objects into school literacy activities beyond the early years curriculum can echo the ways in which children engage in a wider range of literacy activities at home (Leander, K. and Boldt, G. (2013), enriching literacy learning as a consequence.

8.3.3. Confidence as a literacy learner is not just a direct consequence of perceived competency levels.

This study suggests that for a literacy learner to feel confident in this role they need to be able to engage with literacy activities which enable them to express

both who they are and what they are interested in, in a way that fits with their current skills level. In addition, it is important that they feel heard or seen in this expression by others who are important to them, whether peers, family or teaching staff, depending on the individual child. This study suggests that this can be made possible for literacy learners across a range of abilities, by removing barriers that school literacy curricula can put in the way, often in the form of reducing flexibility of delivery, in favour of a very analytical, skills and achievement based hierarchy of tasks. If this can be achieved, the whole construct of 'reluctant readers' who need to 'be motivated' by adults to read, becomes redundant, as illustrated in the "Writers' Studio" project (Kuby et al. 2016).

8.4. Implications for practice in supporting literacy learners who are experiencing more difficulties acquiring early reading skills than the majority of their peers

8.4.1. Enjoying literacy support is not a "bonus" but a prerequisite

What struck me most vividly as I wrote this thesis was that in the Literature Review I discussed literacy skills as being seen as part of a much bigger picture, of reading for pleasure or information, of communicating with others, and of belonging to a whole range of communities, from participating in faith communities to online gaming. Learning to decode for young children, especially in a language with an opaque orthography like English, always seems to me to be an underrated achievement: 'cracking the alphabetic code' of realising how some very similar squiggles on paper represent some quite arbitrary sounds, sometimes as young as four, seems quite remarkable. Decoding does inevitably feature quite strongly in early reading teaching, but in the schools I have worked in in the UK, is usually embedded in the sociable, pleasurable aspects of sharing literacy experiences. However, the trickier you find learning the very abstract and often exceedingly confusing skills of (particularly English!) decoding, the more of your literacy learning time is spent on them, and the less time there is for the sociable, pleasurable aspects. Being obliged to continue to try to learn something that does not come easily is seldom pleasant, so children in this position can easily begin to dislike reading, and then our answer to this is to spend even more time on the aspects they dislike, and even less on the aspects that might make it a bit more enjoyable.

To add salt to the wound, when children in this position become even more reluctant to engage in literacy learning, we often suggest that *they* have an attitude problem. It would seem much more logical for children who are struggling to master decoding to have more opportunities to experience the positive side of literacy learning, and in this thesis I have illustrated some ways in which learning decoding skills can be done in a productive but also enjoyable way.

8.4.2. Literacy support is a social relationship

Literacy learning can, and often does, take place when an individual is engaging in independent, solitary activities. However, literacy support is at the very least a two way relationship, as it is given by one individual to another, but it can also involve a mixture of different relationships, for example between pupils in a pair or small group. The quality of the relationships in which the support is provided does therefore seem likely to impact upon the effectiveness of the learning, but it is much harder to define how good relationships are built than good teaching is delivered, which is a contributing factor to why this aspect has received less attention. The warmth of the relationships developed seemed to be very important, because children needed to trust a teacher in order to venture into learning they find very difficult, and this would argue for the concept of "professional love" (Page, 2018) to be considered more fully, and delineated from concerns about safeguarding issues about inappropriate behaviours.

My study explores how a 1:1 (or 1:2) relationship in a teaching setting is slightly different to that of a teacher with a larger group or whole class, bringing both potential problems as well as benefits. Not having to deploy whole class management strategies means that a teaching relationship can be a little more relaxed, but managing this, especially when a child is experiencing considerable stress regarding their literacy learning, requires developing specific skills. There seems to be a 'sweet spot' where there is a balance between what Boldt (2020) describes as attunement to the pupil with difference, which in my context is some challenge to my pupils to step outside the comfort zone of resolutely sticking to only what is familiar and easy. This balance can be hard to find sometimes, and tricky to maintain, although it can help to keep to awareness of negative flows of affect as an expression of what is happening in the learning situations, rather than as a failure to maintain a good relationship. However, it

was hard to admit to myself, let alone anyone else, when it was not quite perfect, as it is tacitly held to be a ‘given’ that being a good support teacher or T.A. requires the ability to do this naturally. In reality, it is a skill that could be acquired more easily if it were more acceptable to talk through possible strategies, especially if a learner is experiencing a lot of emotional pain from their struggles, rather than thinking in terms of ‘blame’, in that either the learner has behaviour or attitude problems, or the practitioner is ‘not coping’.

Another implication for practice that came as a surprise to me was how much children benefitted in their learning from working in a pair rather than 1:1. It is very obvious, and much discussed in schools, when children do not learn well together, for example if you have a pair who find each other irritating, and squabble, or who distract each other. However, if you get a good pairing, in terms of being supportive to each other, they can really enhance each other’s learning: as adults in school, we can sometimes be too ‘teacher-centric’ in taking credit for learning successes. My study shows how learners can offer each other support that an adult is not able to, for example with Rose and Emily, both emotionally or in learning activities. This suggests that raising the priority of peer to peer relationships within reading support interventions, rather than focusing purely on peer support as a more confident reader scaffolding the reading of a less confident partner. This seems to me to be a very interesting finding that I would like to explore further in the future, as it challenges received wisdom in support teaching that 1:1 is the ‘gold standard’.

8.4.3. Time and space are some of the most important resources

Time and space are often the scarcest resources in busy schools, but they are invaluable to those who are finding learning to read particularly difficult. I knew I was very fortunate in this study to have had the use of an office space, where I could create our own space away from classroom expectations and pressures (situated on a busy corridor with a window in the door so that it was not a safeguarding issue) but the impact on the study was even greater than I had anticipated. A separate place does not necessarily have to be a dedicated room, as spaces can be delineated in other ways than just by walls. In my previous school, I had a small, round table in an even busier corridor, but because I was able to use wall space and storage nearby, and I always worked there, I could establish it as ‘our space to work’, although I made sure I seated

the most easily distracted children with their backs to the passing traffic. Hicks (2002) comments that, alongside learning, children are also engaged in the search for social belonging in school, and for those children who do not, perhaps, feel so securely attached to the learning community in their classroom, having a space where they fully belong to their own learning community can be very valuable.

Although finding staff time to allocate to working with individuals or pairs is often very challenging for SENDCos in school, it is not just the amount of time that matters, it is what Ehret (2018) refers to as the “textures” of time that are also really important. Time feels very different, depending on emotions: it can fly by when something is very enjoyable and absorbing, or slow down and be filled with tension when waiting to face something unwelcome, or even go into slow motion, in those moments of realisation that you are going to fall and there is nothing you can do to prevent it. Time in school often feels to me fast, and full of energy, but this can feel also feel pressurised and stressful, especially when you know that a learner needs to be able to take their time, and gather their mental and emotional resources. Making a space where time feels calm and generous, even for twenty minutes, can make a huge difference to both learning and well-being.

8.4.4. Rapport-building strategies

From my thinking about my own practice, I realised how much I used two strategies to build rapport, which I had only vaguely been aware of before: ‘reading’ both body language and flows of affect. I found I relied a lot more than I had realised on reading body language to work out pupil’s reactions to my teaching, both in terms of emotion and also in judging how much of the lesson content they were understanding and feeling confident with. The power imbalance between teacher and pupil often makes it hard for children to feel that they can give a teacher negative verbal feedback, even of the most constructive kind, so body language is often the only clues to whether the pupil is finding the pace and content of the lesson uncomfortable (or sometimes too comfortable) or not. Although I had been aware of tensions that came and went within the teaching situation, or of times of shared contentment or enjoyment, the vocabulary of affect theory really helped me to identify these more clearly, and thus to be able to work with them more consciously. Boldt (2020) wrote

about how much the importance of attunement in teaching is underestimated, and being aware of when flows of positive affect occur, and what led to them, is helpful in this process. I also realised that identifying flows of negative affect, and thinking about the causes of them, helped me to step back and not see them as a failure on my part, but to analyse what they were expressing, for example, sometimes learners do need to express and work through some negative emotions in the safety of a 1:1 setting, or perhaps I had not pitched the work at quite the right level, and I needed to rethink a bit. These strategies are both 'listening' ones, but listening to communication that does not involve words. This suggests ways to develop strategies to build relationships with pupils when rapport does not seem to develop so easily.

8.4.5. Choose resources that appeal to each individual child

Finding a resource which really appeals to individual pupils can have a transformative effect on literacy support teaching. It may be in terms of content, for example Disney princesses or wild animals as in this study, or in terms of activities, for example having opportunities to draw, or play a game in which they have the satisfaction of beating a teacher. I found that using the concept of "Personal Literacies Landscapes" helped me in this process, as it prompted me to think beyond matching the content of texts to pupils' hobbies or favourite television programmes. "Personal Literacies Landscapes" considers the affective responses of the beginner reader, not only to the texts, but also to the learning and learning situation, linking these to other important aspects of their life, like events happening currently in their family life, or their home culture.

I found that resources that resonated strongly with a learner really did seem to have an agency of their own within our lessons, and I found myself getting drawn into the magic of pink princesses or caught up in the competitiveness of games. However, this seemed to be much more than just about fun: I think it was also about feeling validated as a unique, individual person, which is a boost for self-confidence. It is also about making bridges from the security of home life to the more daunting aspects of "schooled" literacy learning (Pahl, 2014, Hicks, 2002), towards making literacy activities and preferences a valued part of who they are as a person. Building on individual interests did seem to overcome disenchantment with literacy learning: my study shows how even pupils who had become so disenchanted with literacy learning that they would no longer

consider engaging with support did slowly still seemed to rediscover their desire to learn to read. There still seemed to be “literacy desirings” (Kuby et.al., 2016) working quite strongly within all my pupils, however disengaged from literacy learning practices that they originally might have seemed in a classroom situation, and personalising the literacy support seems to be the key to re-igniting them.

8.4.6. “3D” literacy support

In early years settings, when the majority of children tackle early reading skills, literacy activities are usually “three dimensional”, in that they do not happen entirely on flat, two dimensional pages or worksheets (Hicks, 2002), but are linked to, for example, art activities, imaginative play settings or outdoor visits. There is evidence that literacy activities engaged in at home by older children as part of their play lives often include objects like toys or costumes as well as pages (e.g. Leander and Boldt, 2013). Traditionally, literacy support programmes like the Hickey one I used (Hickey, 2000) are multisensory, in that they use visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities, especially linked to memory skills. In my fieldwork, I began to find that taking a step further along this route to include even more active, tactile or play-based learning was even more helpful: Ben, for example, engaged much more with the story of “Stanley’s Stick” when he had a small stick of his own to hold. This has to be managed carefully to retain the focus on the literacy skills, and link them to reading texts: IT reading skills software, for example, can sometimes just be played as a game if not used judiciously.

8.4.7. There still remains a need for individual support for some literacy learners

I would like to raise the question of whether some more intensive 1:1 (or 1:2) help at an earlier stage, particularly for those who are beginning to experience negative emotions about their literacy learning, might actually save money in the long term? The class teacher in my study said that for her the biggest impact of my work with her pupils was the ten-fold increase in their self-confidence, and their greater engagement across the curriculum as a result. Learners who become disengaged across the curriculum can then end up needing support in more lessons than just literacy ones, and possibly for a

longer time frame. Individualised support, especially individually tailored sort that I have delivered in this study, is more demanding on staff time and therefore school budgets, so may have to be reserved for those learners for whom group interventions do not seem to work, either for emotional reasons or because their learning needs do not fit well with those of groups of their peers. However, boosting literacy skills as early and as effectively as possible, would seem to offer not only the least costs in monetary terms, but also in the emotional price the learner pays when struggling in lessons.

8.4.8. Start from where the learner currently is

Often in schools I have found that staff feel that they lack the expertise to help children who are really struggling to acquire literacy skills. However, the expertise required does not seem from this study to be in teaching reading skills, as they are much the same, and acquired in the same order, whatever the factors causing the delay in their development. My reflections on my own practice seem to suggest that the expertise I have built up over years of support teaching consists mostly in having the confidence to teach the child from the point of where they currently are in their literacy skills, letting go of age-related expectations, but at the same time finding resources to do this that are age-appropriate, and interesting to that particular learner. This gets harder as pupils get older, especially if the gap between their literacy skills and their peers' becomes very wide. I feel that much of my 'expertise' lies in knowing where to find, or how to make, resources that fulfil both these needs. This would suggest that it is important that all of a school's reading books should not come from the same scheme, levelled in the same way known to all the children. A secondary set of un- (or inconspicuously) levelled reading books, and/or books aimed at older children, with easier to read text, would seem to be a valuable investment.

8.4.9. Individualised support is better when not planned in great detail in advance

The convention in most UK schools is usually to plan for a whole term or half a term at a time, producing weekly lesson plans to demonstrate the steps needed to achieve the longer term targets. However, the real strength of 1:1 support seems to lie in being able to be responsive to children's interests and preferences, and these take time to get to know. In addition, 1:1 support can

also be tailored very closely to learning needs, which do not seem to gradually develop at predictable rate over time: instead, there are often times when visible progress seems very slow, or even absent, then suddenly a big jump will happen. This could be explained by increased confidence growing in several smaller subskills, which then all come together to produce a 'lightbulb moment' for the learner. Both of these factors argue for having a general plan for the development of cognitive reading skills, but without a set timescale, and with flexibility in methods of delivery. Although again it may seem counter-intuitive, this approach can achieve faster results than a more time-pressured one, as it allows time to be invested in the things that will really boost confidence and learning for that individual learner. Time is a really valuable commodity in schools, but this study suggests that the focus should be on using it strategically where it will bring the greatest rewards, rather than trying to spend as little as possible.

8.5. Strengths and limitations of this study

One of the strengths of this study is that it is very strongly practice based. It was conducted in school in a way that was as close as possible to the everyday lived experience of delivering a literacy support intervention, reflecting the realities of being classroom based, in a way that hopefully resonates with fellow practitioners. While this study focuses on data collected from September 2017 to April 2019 at Greenfields Primary, it also reflects decades of experience I have acquired working in various forms of learning support, in a wide range of schools, and with literacy learners from ages four to sixteen. I was fortunate to be able to spend three years in school as a part-time researcher/volunteer, enabling me to get to know the children and staff very well, and to have an extended period of fieldwork in which to monitor even quite gradual changes over time. The limitations of the study are the obverse of its strengths: it is based very much on my own experiences, which may or may not be similar to those of other practitioners. It is also framed by the context of the particular school I was in, and was based on a relatively small number of literacy learners.

Another strength of this study is its foundations in posthumanist thinking, which opened new perspectives to consider literacy learning in new ways, especially to see connections and affective aspects. However, I am aware that in terms of communicating my ideas to fellow practitioners, some of the posthumanist

vocabulary may seem very strange, and some of the perspectives a little dissonant with their lived experiences in the classroom, as this was often my first perceptions of them too. I have tried to bridge these two perspectives in my work, and have done so to some extent by "code switching": using more everyday language when considering implications for practice, and more discourse specific vocabulary when writing about the literature and methodologies. From my own position as a practitioner-researcher, I feel that these conversations between the two ways of thinking are a strength of my study, but I am aware that to anyone positioned solely in one world or the other, it may seem a compromise that has reduced the integrity of my arguments.

8.6. Directions for future research

As these findings express solely my own experiences, it would be very interesting to research other practitioners' experiences to see if they work consciously with emotions and affective flows in a similar way, or if they have different perspectives on the themes I have highlighted.

There seems to be a continuing need to explore the "more than cognitive" aspects of other forms of learning support too, as literacy is just one area that pupils benefit from help with. This would include a further exploration of both the application of my concept of "Personal Literacies Landscapes" to further literacy research, and also the potential of peer-peer learning in a literacy support teaching context.

I would have liked to be able to follow my pupils' progress over a longer period of time, especially those in the second year of my study on whom I had no further information. With hindsight, I wish I had felt more confident in myself as a researcher in the early stages, and so more able to explore working collaboratively with parents too. It would also have been helpful to be able to talk with my pupils about our work together once I had analysed my data, to see how much their perspectives resonated with, or differed from mine.

It would also be very interesting to work with slightly older pupils, as I have used very similar approaches to literacy support with pupils aged from five to fifteen. If possible, it would be exciting to be able to work in a more collaborative way, and to generate more information from the pupils as co-researchers about their perspectives on the affective elements of literacy learning that I have explored

in this study. It would also be interesting to explore the experiences in this area of children from a more diverse range of communities than those in this study.

Lastly, this study highlights the potential of researching further into the benefits of peer-peer teaching and learning in 1:2 specialist dyslexia support, rather than accepting 1:1 as the 'gold standard' for dyslexia interventions.

8.7. Closing thoughts

Returning to Lenz Taguchi's (2010) lament, which I quoted in Chapter 3, that:

> This is, unfortunately, a hugely overlooked consequence of education in education research, which is still predominantly preoccupied with separating the production of knowledge as an individual cognitive process from the production of identity and subjectivity in contexts of teaching and learning. (Lenz Taguchi 2010:121)

I hope that I have succeeded in helping to rectify this oversight with this thesis, by developing the concepts of the "more-than-cognitive" aspects of learning to read, and "Personal Literacies Landscapes", and that these ideas can be built upon to help more effectively those children who find learning to read particularly difficult.

Appendix A

Data set 2017-8

Week beginning	Journal entries:	Lesson plans started:
September 11th	11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th.	
18th	18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd.	
25th	25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th.	
October 2nd	2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th.	
9th	9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th.	
16th	16th, 17-18th, 19th, 20th.	V: 16th, 18th, 20th B: 17th, 19th
Half term		
30th	30th, 31st, 2nd, 3rd.	V: 30th, 1st. B: 30th, 2nd, 3rd
November 6th	6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th.	V: 6th, 7th, 9th. B: 7th, 8th, 10th
13th	13th, 14th, 15th.	V: 13th. B: 13th, 14th
20th	20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th.	V: 20th, 21st, 23rd B: 20th, 21st, 23rd
27th	27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 1st.	V: 27th, 30th. B: 28th, 30th
December 4th	4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th.	V: 4th. B: 4th
11th	11th, 12th, 13th.	B: 10th
Christmas		
January 1st	4th, 5th.	
8th	8th, 9th, 10th, 11th.	V: 8th, 9th, 10th. B: 10th.
15th	15th, 16th, 18th, 19th.	V: 15th, 16th, 18th, 19th B: 15th, 18th
22nd	22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th.	B: 22nd.
29th	29th, 30th, 31st, 1st.	V: 30th, 31st. B: 29th, 31st.
February 5th	5th, 6th, 7th, 8th.	V: 5th, 8th. B: 5th, 6th.
12th	12th, 14th, 15th.	B: 13th.
Half term		
26th	27th, 28th, 1st.	V: 27th B: 1st.
March 5th	7th, 8th.	V: 5th, 6th, 8th.
12th	12th, 13th, 14th, 15th.	V: 12th, 14th. B: 12th, 15th.
19th	19th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd.	V: 20th.
26th	26th, 27th, 28th, 29th.	
Easter		
April 16th	18th, 19th, 20th.	V: 17th. B: 17th.
23rd	23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th.	V: 24th. B: 23rd, 25th.
30th	30th, 1st, 2nd, 3rd.	V: 30th. B: 3rd.
May 7th	9th, 10th, 11th.	
14th	14th, 16th.	V: 15th.
Half term		
June 4th	5th.	
25th	25th.	
June 19th	Interview with Sue	

Data set 2018-9

Week beginning	Journal entries:	Lesson plans started:
September 10th	10th, 11th, 13th.	
17th	20th.	
24th	24th, 25th.	
October 1st		
8th	10th, 11th.	
15th	16th, 17th, 18th.	
22nd	23rd, 24th, 25th.	
Half term		
November 5th	6th, 7th, 8th, 9th.	E: 7th, 8th A: 7th, 8th, 9th. R: 8th
12th	12th, 13th, 15th, 16th.	E: 15th, 16th A: 14th R: 15th
19th	19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd.	E: 19th, 20th, 22nd. A: 21st R: 20th
26th	26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th.	E: 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th. A: 27th R: 27th
December 3rd	4th, 5th, 6th.	E: 4th, 11th.
10th	12th, 14th.	E: 12th, 14th. A: 12th
Christmas		
January 7th	8th, 9th, 10th.	R: 8th
14th	14th, 15th, 17th, 18th.	E: 17th. A: 14th R: 17th
21st	21st, 22nd, 24th, 25th.	A: 21st
28th	28th, 29th, 31st, 1st.	E: 28th. R: 28th
February 4th	4th, 5th, 7th, 8th.	A: 5th
11th	11th, 12th, 14th, 15th.	E: 11th. R: 12th
Half term		
25th	25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 1st.	E: 25th. A: 28th R: 25th
March 4th	4th, 5th, 6th.	E: 4th. R: 4th
11th	11th, 12th, 14th, 15th.	E: 14th A: 14th R: 14th
18th	18th, 19th, 21st, 22nd.	E: 22nd
25th	25th, 26th, 27th, 28th.	
April 1st	1st, 2nd, 4th.	
8th	10th	
Easter		
April 22nd	23rd, 24th, 26th.	
29th	29th.	
April 29th	Interview with Sue	
April 30th	Interview with Rachael	

Appendix B

Excerpt from my research journal 10.10.18.

(This entry was completed after my first intervention lesson with Emily, who talks at home to her immediate family but not to anyone else. I had been supporting Emily in class in maths for the past few weeks.)

Finally started working with Emily – she has been looking at me a bit questioningly. I was really nervous in case she didn't want to come out with me but she was fine. We started with some picture ordering then memory work with numbers and letters – she needed me to say them, but we will need to choose between visual alone or my saying alone – will ask her to choose. Used maracas to do patterns to copy – Emily quite ok to copy mine or produce her own for me to copy. I said everything I did was to help with reading and spelling, and said about your brain getting better at things you practice and that I would always explain how it helped. If she shrugged then I would know she would like more explanations. I had told Sue I was planning to do this, and she said it fitted in with the Speech Therapist, who was aiming for an involuntary sound like a gasp or laugh with things like the "Pop Up Pirate" game. Chatted afterwards with Sue. She wants me to write down everything I do in Emily's intervention record book. She said Emily hadn't been keen to use maracas before but I had asked if she wanted the door open or shut and she had chosen shut. Sue thought Emily was happier because we were doing "reading" not "talking" work. Emily ordered the story pictures with no trouble – not really indicating language problems. I did notice in class that Emily had checked that every single bit of paper was glued properly, and when I asked if she kept her room tidy she nodded – I am wondering about a bit of perfectionism? Hammed up the "silly me!" a bit when I made a mistake to show mistakes were ok.

It seems important to keep a large element of reading to keep the pressure off talking, but working with Emily will be a huge amount of work, as I will have to make individual resources with pictures to point at instead of speaking – will try rhyme/alliteration odd-one-out for blends for tomorrow. Will try instruments again for patterns, and try copying movements like tapping or clapping. Need to look at her class literacy book to see how she writes – may be possible to have

written conversations? Also thinking about buying a “talking tin” to see if Emily might be happy to record something at home for me to hear?

I was really pleased that I had come to the same conclusion as the Speech Therapist about boosting Emily’s confidence in school, but I had based this on my own experience of being shy. I also think I should try to treat Emily in as grown up a way as her age allows.

Sue is going to help me to negotiate taking Emily out of one school phonics session a week to make my timetable work – really helped that Dom had said about the suspicions that specialist teachers are often held under in schools, as I think it is much more likely that she will get an agreement than I would!

Appendix C

Sample lesson plan for Ben (31.1.18 – completed over 2 20-minute lessons)

Below is a copy of a typical lesson plan, in this instance for Ben. I have added an additional column on the right to explain what each element of the lesson contains and why it is included.

Alphabet arc	a-k	*Warm up activity with wooden letters arranged alphabetically in an arc. Used traditionally to learn alphabetical order and to develop letter recognition and memory skills. The wooden letters are often then used to make words and change letters in these for word building.*
Memory	Pairs game with teens numbers	*Based on the concept that memory can be improved by learning conscious strategies. Pairs involves laying out 2 of every card face down remembering where the matching card had previously been revealed. I had chosen teen numbers here because Ben had been struggling to identify them in maths lessons.*
Overlearning	Cards - reading routine High frequency words	*Each new letter learned has a small cue card with a picture to help build memory links. The letters are read by the child, or the sound given by the teacher for the child to write. I also made cards for frequently needed small words (e.g. the) for sight recognition*
New letter or blend	-nd	*This is following the Hickey multi-sensory structured teaching system for dyslexia, but is very similar to the national phonics teaching structure*

Dictation	My hand has sand on it	*Dictation in a sentence helps to transfer new knowledge from letter or word focus into the child's writing, hopefully*
Reading	"Hiccups"	*A reading book from my own selection at home – at a level for Ben to tackle independently but not with the school reading levels sticker on it*
Language skills	Story structure	*I added this section for the Pilot Study as I was originally looking at language skills and reading. In this lesson I was looking at the class literacy focus text to talk about beginnings, middles and ends, and to help Ben to understand class literacy lessons more*

Appendix D

Below is a copy of an Individual Learning Plan, evaluation and "next steps"

Individual Learning Plan for Ben: October – December 2017

To be able to:

1. Order alphabetically wooden letters a - f
2. Remember 4 random letters presented visually
3. Read and spell regular one and two syllable words with the letters itpnsa
4. Read the first 15 high frequency words
5. Read Level 1 "Benchmark" text at 90-95% accuracy
6. Re-tell six main steps in a familiar story

In October, Ben could identify the individual letters in the Benchmarking text, but was not able to put them together into words, but this time he read it with 100% accuracy. He was so pleased to be able to do this, and beamed from ear to ear with pride! This has really made a difference to his approach to reading, as he said he likes reading now that he is confident doing it, whereas before he had to be coaxed into having a go. He has also achieved his targets of reading all the first 15 high frequency words, remembering 4 random letters, setting out the alphabet to "f" and getting to "a" on the structured literacy programme, although we have stuck to one syllable rather than two syllable words. I have tried a range of different strategies to present the activities in ways that would appeal to Ben, for example printing the high frequency words in outline so that he could colour them in while saying them, as he really enjoys colouring, but he does find half an hour of 1:1 a little long, because it is very focused. I think he may be better next half term with 4 20 minute lessons instead of 3 30 minute ones, although I am hoping that his enthusiasm may grow when he makes the link between reading success and working on his skills. We have talked about the main points in the class texts when we have pre-read them, and we will continue with this, as well as working on Ben identifying any vocabulary he is not sure of so that it can be explained, and he begins to monitor his understanding of the text independently. I feel it would help Ben if he felt more confident to ask questions about tasks, as at the moment he feels success is completing a task independently, even when he is unsure of what he needs to do.

January – February 2018

To be able to:

1. Order alphabetically wooden letters a - h
2. Repeat 2 numbers in reverse order
3. Read and spell regular one and two syllable words with the letters itpnsadheck
4. Read the first 30 high frequency words
5. Read Level 4 “Benchmark” text at 90-95% accuracy
6. unfamiliar vocabulary in class texts

Appendix E

Example of a participant information sheet for parents/carers

Participant information sheet (parents/carers)

I would like to invite you and your child to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done, and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and decide if you would like to take part. Please ask if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information.

Research title:

An exploration of the possible impact of "multisensory teaching methods" on the early reading skills of children in KS1 or 2 who are making slower than expected progress with both their spoken language and Literacy skills.

What is the purpose of this study?

I have worked for many years now as a Specialist Dyslexia teacher, teaching children who are struggling with their Literacy skills to read, using a structured programme that uses visual, listening and writing skills very closely together. I have long felt that this would be very helpful for a wider range of children than just those who have been assessed as dyslexic, particularly those who are less confident with their language skills, as these two areas are often closely linked. This would also help children to get this sort of support earlier, as language skills are usually assessed from a young age, while dyslexia assessments don't usually happen until a few years into school life. I have been fortunate enough to be able to enrol on a PhD course, to investigate further the possible impact of this.

Aims of the study:

I have adapted the multisensory programme slightly to tailor it more closely to developing spoken language skills as well as reading. I plan to use it with individual children, and follow their progress closely over fifteen months, beginning with a three month pilot phase to ensure the programme is suitable for each individual child, so that I can assess the outcomes relating to both their confidence in using spoken language and their Literacy skills.

Taking part

It is completely up to you to decide if you would like to take part. If you decide you would like to, I will then ask you to sign a consent form. Before you decide, please consider the following questions:

Why has my child been invited to take part?

The children who have been invited are those that the school staff feel would benefit from some additional support with their Literacy skills, including reading, writing and speaking and listening. If you do not wish for your child to be included, this will have no negative consequences for yourself or your child, and would not affect any other possible support they may be offered in the future.

What will we have to do?

Your child will be taught individually for three half hour sessions a week, taking the place of either guided reading or phonics sessions, as the intervention would include both these activities, liaising with their class teacher so that they do not miss out on other class learning or activities. I will plan the interventions so that the children enjoy them, and they will be carried out in the same way as a school Teaching Assistant delivering support, so the children will not feel different in any way. I have had many years' experience in teaching children in this way, and feel confident that I will be able to help your child to make progress with their Literacy skills.

What if there is a problem?

Trying to identify and put right any possible problems or unforeseen consequences is part of the research process, so I would be really grateful if you could tell me about any problems as soon as they arise, and I will adapt my intervention to solve the problem. If there was something you felt you would rather not talk to me directly about, please see Mrs Steele (Assistant Head and SENCo) who is happy to discuss any issues.

Will information about my child be kept confidential?

I will ensure confidentiality for all participants, including staff and children, by not using any real names of people or places. I will ensure that all my data is kept securely where only I can access it, and will destroy it once my thesis is completed. My thesis will only be read by my tutors and the external academics who mark it. There is a possibility that I may be invited to talk about the implications of my research at an academic conference, but again all participants would remain completely anonymous, and no child would be discussed individually.

What will happen if we feel we are no longer able to be part of the study?

You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any point. It will then be your choice whether the data collected so far could remain as part of the study, or be destroyed.

Further information and contact details:

Gillian Smith

email: gillian.m.smith@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Dr Dominic Griffiths (Research Supervisor)

Email: dominic.griffiths@mmu.ac.uk

9.5.17

Gillian Smith
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M15 6GX
Tel: 01270 767938

Manchester Metropolitan University

Consent Form

Title of Project:

An exploration of the possible impact of "multisensory teaching methods" on the early reading skills of children in KS1 or 2 who are making slower than expected progress with both their spoken language and Literacy skills.

Name of Researcher: Gillian Smith

Participant Identification Code for this project:

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated …. for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure, which will be audio recorded.	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.	☐
3. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.	☐
4. I agree to take part in the above research project.	☐
5. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me.	☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.

Manchester Metropolitan
University

Memo

To: Gillian Smith

From: Prof Liz de Freitas,

Date: 18/07/2017

Subject: Ethics Application Ref. ED-1617-032 Smith

Title: How can “multisensory teaching methods” be used to teach early reading skills more effectively to children in KS1 who are making slower than expected progress with both their spoken language and Literacy skills?

Thank you for your application for ethical approval.

The Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee review process has recommended approval of your ethics application. This approval is granted for 22 months. Extensions to the approval period can be requested.

If your research changes you might need to seek ethical approval for the amendments. Please request an amendment form.

We wish you every success with your project.

E. de Freitas

Prof Liz de Freitas
Head of Ethics
Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee

Appendix F

Example of colour coding to identify excerpts from my research diary that seemed significant for each pupil, to help me to find them again when analysing my data.

Key: Alicia Emily Rose

26.2.19

Just had Alicia today – swapped lessons to help school. Alicia is getting good with her letters now and targeted words, but we still have "my" and "to" so made a little book with them in it. Still not identifying words from her cards when they are in a book. Need to think of a way to do "h" – our next letter: another little book? Or an activity with objects starting with h?

27.2.19

The Head said that I had "worked wonders with Alicia", and asked how long they would have me for now – really nice to get recognition! Muttered a bit in reply though!

Emily and Rose as a pair today. Began by getting out home/school reading record books, and read aloud Emily's Mum's comment that she was getting more confident with her reading, and gave her lots of praise. Suddenly thought I should check that she knew what confident meant, so asked, and Emily shook her head. Rose said that when she thought she couldn't do something and her Mum said of course you can, it gave her confidence. I said that when everyone starts something new or learns something new they are often not sure if they can do it straightaway – even *(the Head Teacher)*! But when you think to yourself that you will give it your best and it might be a bit tricky and you might not get it right at first, but then you keep going and keep getting a bit better and a bit better. I said that when Emily sees me when she is going to her swimming lesson at the leisure centre, and I am all hot and drinking my water, I am coming out from my exercise class, which I am trying to get better and better at. I said that when I first started I thought I was so rubbish at it that I felt like giving up, and I got a real look of what I was sure was recognition from Emily. I said that I decided that I had two choices: give up or stick at it and see if I could get better,

and I am! Trying to reassure Emily that It is so hard to know if you are helping when you don't get feedback – Evelyn's voice is a very present absence! Having the little office to work in does seem to be making a big difference, as we can talk about things like confidence that would be much harder with lots of others around. With Emily, my teaching is very "Candace Kuby": very rhizomatic as I never know what will work until I try it, or what might come up as an opportunity in a lesson. Rose reminded me that I had promised to make sure they would get their turn to play in the Post Office role play area next time – need to sort this with Sue first thing tomorrow.

Appendix G

Sample questions from semi-structured interviews with staff:

1) How much has each child's reading and spelling improved in the school assessments over the year?

2) Do you feel that the work they have been doing with me has contributed to their increased skills? If so, in what ways?

3) Do you think that the work they have been doing with me has benefitted them in any other ways?

4) Is there anything that you think, as their class teacher, that I should consider doing anything differently next year?

5) From a school management/SENDCo point of view, do you think the benefits of the intervention would merit paying a staff member to deliver it?

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